



Kindesliebe

A ROMANCE OF FATHERLAND



By

Henry Faulkner Darnell





✓
To Dr. Goldwin Smith.

with the complements & regards
of the Author; -

R. G. S.

"
Decr 1892." -



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Miss Mary Ann
The daughter of Mr. [illegible]

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Kindesliebe

♦ ♦ ♦ A Romance of Fatherland.

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BY

HENRY FAULKNER DARNELL.  
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AUTHOR OF

"A NATION'S THANKSGIVING," "SONGS OF THE SEASONS,"
"PHILIP HAZELBROOK," &c.

— • • —
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DEDICATION.

TO A CHILD-FRIEND.

Come out of the Past, little maiden,
Just as I knew thee of old,—
A vision of childish beauty,
All lovely, half coy, half bold ;
With a golden glory about thee
In thy tresses floating free,
And thy dark brown eyes all beaming
With the spirit of mischievous glee.

Come out of the Past, my darling,
For the Present is all too sad,
And there's little left in the world now
To make the spirit glad ;
But one old-time glance of your eye, dear,
And one tender touch of your hand,
Would come, like the perfume of flowers,
O'er a waste and weary land.

Come out of the Past, my child-friend,
If only for one brief hour ;
Be to me all you were, dear,
When first I felt your power ;
Weave but once more around me
The tender, magical spell
That compassed my willing spirit
With the chains it loved so well.

Come out of the Past, little maiden,
Just as you used to be,
And take once more in the gloaming
Your old place on my knee :
List, dear, to another story,
As you loved to do of yore,
Heed not the undertone, dear, .
From a heart too often sore.

Alas ! for earth's purest treasures,
That scenes and hearts must change ;
And, in life's sad transmutations,
Familiar things grow strange.
As the bud opens into the blossom,
So maturity follows youth ;
But where, in the waste of the Future,
Is the fruitage of love and truth ?

Alas ! that the little maiden
Must grow into woman and wife,
And I go lonelier downward
The shadier side of life.
We cannot set back the hands, dear,
That move o'er the dial of Time ;
Or summon again the sunshine
That hath passed to another clime.

Then stay in the Past, my child-friend,
A memory tender, and fair ;
Lest the chilling blasts of the Future,
Or the Present with its glare,
Congeal the warm tide of affection
That flowed so full and free,
Or dry up that love's pure fountain
Thy presence awoke in me.

KINDESLIEBE.

RÉSUMÉ.

THE Vicomte de Luys—a young French nobleman of wealth and distinction, and of somewhat advanced political and religious opinions—by his marriage with a young lady of high birth and great beauty, incurs the jealousy and hatred of a powerful kinsman, high in the favor both of the Court and the Church.

Being accused of heresy, in order to escape a *lettre de cachet* he is compelled to fly the country. His lands are confiscated, and his infant heir falls into the hands of his enemies; but eluding their pursuit, he places his young wife in concealment and leaves his native land, hoping that in a little while the storm will have blown over, and he may be able to return to her with safety.

Finding refuge in a retired village amid the Lower Alps, he endeavors during his stay among them, to improve the lot of the simple inhabitants; and finally loses his life in the effort to rescue the victims of a fearful avalanche which has desolated almost the entire valley.

Marie de Luys, his wife, wearying at last of her confinement and solitude, sets out in search of her lost husband and child. Before her steadfast purpose prisons, convents, hospitals, all yield her admittance.

For a time her search is vain; but at length in the sick ward of the Convent Orphanage at Drépigné she discovers her lost child.

This affecting scene is witnessed by the Lady Abbess, to whose care the child had been entrusted. After a severe conflict within herself, the child is spirited away, and the poor mother goes forth into the world again more hopeless than ever. The Lady Abbess, however, does not betray her secret.

Reaching the Alpine village which had been the scene of her husband's heroic death, she finds his "nameless grave," the whole story of his courage and devotion being narrated to her by a young girl to whom he had shewn kindness, and with whom he had left the proofs of his identity.

After passing some years in this remote village—during which period many journeys were undertaken with a view to the discovery of her child—she comes to the town of Stoltzenberg-am-Rhein, at the season of the Annual Fair.

Here her sympathy is excited by the pitiful story of a young mother dying in her confinement. In ministering to her, she discovers that she is the young bride of her long-lost child, who, having in his youth escaped from his captors, had crossed the borders of France and entered the German army. Rising in the service, he had

attracted the notice and gained the affection of one of the young princes, in consequence of which he had been made a captain in the Royal Guard.

In this position he wins the heart of the fair and gentle Margaréthé, daughter of the proud and powerful Baron Rudersdorf. Regardless of everything but their own happiness, they fly from the Court and are secretly married.

Ruined and disgraced, the young husband dies in poverty and obscurity. The child-wife lingers only to give birth to an infant daughter, and to die in the arms of her husband's mother, who is thus at last rewarded by the acquisition of the "last link" that binds her to earth, with all the necessary evidence to establish the child's identity.

Resenting the treatment to which her son had been subjected by its lord, and uncertain as to her future course, she yet decides to remove to Rudersdorf. Here, the Baron's attention is singularly directed to the child; and—on the sudden demise of the now aged Marie de Luys—she is adopted by him, as one thrown friendless and forlorn upon the world.

Eventually her real lineage is discovered, and, in the sunshine of the child's love and devotion to him, the Baron's heart blossoms out again in kindness and sympathy to all around him. The reign of tyranny and harshness is past—the fruit of blighted hopes and wounded affection—and Rudersdorf once more is the scene of prosperity and peace.

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Canto I.

A SUMMER-DAY.

A summer-day
In Southern Germany. There lay
A slumb'rous stillness far and near
On all the sultry atmosphere.
O'er hill and valley, copse and brake,
All Nature seemed but half awake,
As if a spell were softly thrown
Upon her chords of varied tone,
Which thrilled no more the list'ning ear
With joy or pain—with hope or fear.

A solemn hush lay on the air,
As if a presence floated there,
And, wide diffused, the sense of rest
A heavenly visitant confessed.
No flutt'ring sound of leaf or wing
Chimed with the dripping of the spring ;

No wild-flower stirred on slender stem,
Nor shook its starry diadem.
All motionless the lily-bells,
Exhaling fragrance from their cells.
Beneath their footsteps, all unheard,
The zephyrs left the leaves unstirred.
The gentle murmur of the bees
Amid the blooming flowers and trees
An invitation seemed to ease,
As lazily they come and go,
Yet loth their labor to forego.
By distance softened, came the song
Of streams that wind the rocks among,
Or over moss and pebbles stray,
Sweet-singing on their devious way.

The winding valley lay below,
Bathed in the sun's meridian glow ;
Where through the rich and level meads
The river flows, all fringed with reeds,
Or overhung with foliage rank,
Trailing from either verdant bank.

O'er all the scene the quiet steals,
And ev'ry sense the influence feels.
The laborer leans upon his plough
And wipes the moisture from his brow,

While passive stand the panting steeds
And quaff the fragrance of the meads.
The shepherd, prone upon his back,
Pursues his dreams beneath the stack,
As fumes, like those from Lethe's bowl,
Steep in forgetfulness his soul.
His flocks, unwatched, refuse to stray,
But gather where the shadows play.
His reedy pipe beside him lies
As fast each blissful moment flies ;
It lacks the breath once wont to fill
And wake the echoes of the hill.

A dozen rods beneath the feet,
Just where two roads, converging, meet,
Is seen the straggling village street,
With many a cottage, small and white,
'Mid bowering trees half-hid from sight,
And clust'ring 'neath an ancient spire,
Like children 'round an aged sire
To catch the benediction shed
Upon each bowed and rev'rent head.

The tortuous path which climbs the ridge
Diverges hard beside a bridge—
A structure rude—which spans the stream
With many a pier and stalwart beam,

And gives a passage free and wide
Athwart the broad and ample tide.
Beyond, emerging from the green
And undulating vale, is seen
An ancient pile, whose towers gray
Have held with undisputed sway
That fair domain for many a day.
Yea, centuries have come and gone,
Yet stoutly, still, it holds its own;
For never has a stranger hand
Detached one single rood of land.
The weapon which the prize had won
Preserved it still from sire to son,
And 'mid the castled keeps most famed
Not one with Rudersdorf was named.

On those grim walls had warders kept
Their vigils true, while ladies slept.
Forth from those towers thro' many a night
Had blazed the ruddy beacon-light,
To call the vassals from their farms
And hard-earned rest to fly to arms;
While through those piercé d turrets, high,
Had flashed the dread artillery.
Drawbridge and moat, now all o'ergrown,
Their proper uses once had known;



"On those green walls his warriors sleep
Their heads on: while his bones sleep."

—*Chap. I.*

And oft in many a sudden fray
Had safely barred and kept the way,
To hold victorious foes at bay
Until—responsive to the flame
Which gleamed aloft—the rescue came.

Oft had those terraced lawns, so green,
Been witness to some bloody scene :
Oft, where those crystal fountains pour
Their silver streams, had human gore
Sprung freely from the hearts of all
At Honour's or at Friendship's call ;
Or when some last and desperate stand
Was made for king and fatherland.

Within, in spite of all the change
Which makes things most familiar strange,
The Past had left full many a trace
Which time nor taste could quite efface.
Some stain upon the threshold fair ;
Some dent upon the oaken stair ;
A rusted brand, or broken shield,
Or battle-axe none now could wield,
Would tell of some illustrious page
Which glorified the feudal age,

When might was right o'er all the land—
When honors fled the weakling's hand,
And o'er life's wild and troubled sea
Gleamed the fair star of chivalry.



Canto II.

AN OREAD.

Beside the rocky ledge that bound
The narrow path that upward wound,
There, half-reclining in the shade
By level boughs of hawthorn made,
Lay, dreamily, a little maid.
Eight summers fair had o'er her flown,
Eight winters' snows had come and gone
Only to find her sweeter still—
That tender flower beside the hill.

Her slender figure, lightly posed,
Her native ease and grace disclosed:
Her hands were clasped beneath her head—
Her only pillow, lightly spread.
Upon her lap, her broad hat set,
Held flow'rets fair—wild mignonette,

With many a child of copse and dell,
And those which bloom on rock and fell.
Here, creepers, too, and tendrils fair,
Commingling with the blossoms rare,
Proclaimed the graceful, childish art
In which she late had played her part ;
'Till, drooping 'neath the midday heat,
She ceased to weave the garlands sweet.

So rich in native loveliness,
But little need had she of dress,
Which oft, for meretricious ends,
Impairs the charms which Nature lends.
Her scanty frock scarce reached the knee,
And left the neck and shoulders free ;
Bare were her limbs, and bare her arms,
Displaying all their dimpled charms :
Bare were the rosy, blue-veined feet,
To climb the hills so light and fleet,
Though near her, by the rivulet,
The tiny shoes and hose were set ;
Not such as village maidens wear,
But fashioned with a tend'rer care,
And telling, 'mid this rocky waste,
Of loving thought and purer taste.

From off her forehead, broad and fair,
All richly streamed her ruddy hair ;
Like the first tint on autumn leaf,
Or like the yellow grain in sheaf ;
Or like the sunrise when its gold
Is tinged with colors manifold.
Her eyes, beneath their lids concealed,
Kept their blue depths all unrevealed.
The slender outlines of her cheek
Refinement's subtle grace bespeak ;
While on her brow there sat enshrined
That perfect purity of mind
That knows no contact with mankind.

'Tis passing strange, how oft we find
In spots where Nature's most unkind,
A something still of heavenly birth
To bless and beautify the earth ;
Which charms the view where'er we rove,
From earth beneath or skies above,
And testifies that " God is love."

Some lichen clinging to the rock—
Sole witness of the earthquake's shock—
Which rears, amid the calm and storm,
To heaven its huge fantastic form :

Some quaint, distorted, ancient tree,
To which the moss clings lovingly :
Some brooklet, leaping into sight
And sparkling in its devious flight :
Sunbeams that flicker 'mid the shade
By rocks and trees commingling made :
Some tuneful bird with plumage bright,
Or insect flashing in the light :
Some tiny flower, like mountain maid,
That shuns the meadow and the glade,
Content to trust her modest charms
To the wild tempest's rugged arms.

E'en so in humblest homes we see—
Where the stern hand of Poverty
Condemns to plain and scanty fare,
And robs of many a blessing rare—
A true refinement linger still,
Beyond the vulgar worldling's skill,
The cultured eye of Taste to fill.

What forms of beauty and of grace—
What charms of figure and of face
The artist's eye may often trace
In some secluded, homely place !
Some Dryad in the tangled wood :
Some Naiad by the spring or flood :

Some fair Rebecca by the well :
Some Helen in the bosky dell :
Some barefoot gypsy by the way,
Or some Maud Muller, raking hay :
Some peasant-girl the hearth beside,
Whom, for true worth and beauty's pride,
A prince or peer might make his bride ;
Whose spirit pure, and queenly grace,
Might well adorn earth's highest place.

* * * * *

Such, Fatherland, the blossoms fair,
Which crown thy homes with beauty rare ;
Which in thy forests, dark and deep,
Forth from the cabin thresholds peep ;
Which by thy castled crags and streams
Shed on fond hearts their sunny beams,
And make them glow with love and pride
In lowly vale—on bleak hillside.
Such, graced with modesty and truth,
And filled with tenderness and ruth,
Have blest thee in the ages past—
Shall bless thee still, as time doth last ;
Shall spread thy fame o'er land and sea
And make thee mother of a free,
And brave, and noble progeny !

Canto III.

A DAY-DREAM.

How long she slept she could not tell,
So soft and sweet the witching spell.
How fast the fleeting moments flew,
Her charmèd senses never knew :
Onward they sped with pinions light,
Leaving no trace to mark their flight,
As when the last expiring motion
Of ripples dies upon the ocean.

And now, as o'er the lovely sleeper
And o'er the scene the rest grows deeper,
It seems as if a charm were laid
By magic power on stream and glade,
And all the powers in earth and air
Were lulled into a slumber fair ;
And she—though little rustic maid,
In simple russet garb arrayed—

Had, like the fabled princess, been
The reigning beauty of the scene.

But o'er her senses, steeped and bound
In slumber's witchery profound,
There comes a strange, mysterious sound :
A rustling, as of garments bright—
A beating, as of pinions light ;
Whilst—soft as starlight on the lake,
Or zephyr stealing thro' the break ;
And, light as dewdrops on the grass,
Which gleam, like diamonds, as we pass—
There seeks the portal of her ear,
In tones most musically clear,
Inspiring more of awe than fear,
This sweet refrain :

SONG.

“ Little maid, with deep blue eyes—
 Blue as heaven above thee,
Leading ever to the skies
 All who truly love thee ;
Little knowest thou thy power
 To revive and cherish
Love, like torn and trampled flower,
 Doomed to fade and perish.

“ Like the little beam that glances
Through the cottage door,
Tremulously moves and dances
On the oaken floor :
Like the summer bird that singeth
To the sons of toil ;
Like the op’ning bud that bringeth
Hope of future spoil :

“ Thine to bear to home and hearth
Peace, and hope, and beauty ;
Thine to show to those on earth,
‘ Love the highest duty.’
Thou who cheer’st the lone hillside,
Charm now the castle’s sadness ;
Scatter blessings far and wide—
Fill the land with gladness.

“ To the Baron, sad and lonely,
Daily bring a flower ;
His bruised spirit needeth only
Love’s reviving power.
I, it is, who bid thee stay not—
I, in Paradise ;
Be to him what I now may not—
‘ Kleine Edelweis.’

“Thou must know no doubt nor fear,
Modest little maiden ;
I will surely linger near
With sweet comfort laden.
Deem not that his heart is cold—
Cruel or untender ;
Let love make thy spirit bold
Service sweet to render.

“’Neath the desert, parched and weary,
Freshest springs abide ;
Under shadows, dark and dreary,
Purest flow’rets hide :
Pain and sorrow oft may harden
Tend’rest hearts and true,
Until—token sweet of pardon—
Heaven’s light shineth through.

See, the Baron doth appear,
Modest little maiden ;
Give to him thy off’ring dear,
With its incense laden.
If he look into thine eyes,
With the love-light beaming,
As if searching through the skies
In his silent dreaming :

“ If, as one whose heart is riven,
He shall silent stand ;
If he sigh, and look to heaven—
Take thy tender hand ;
Know that I am still beside thee—
‘ Kleine Edelweiss ’—
To his love, that I confide thee—
I, in Paradise.”

The voice is still. The slumb’rer wakes,
As daylight thro’ her vision breaks.
Each sense, benumb’d, regains its sway ;
The ling’ring echoes roll away,
And, mingling with the airy tide,
Are wafted upward far and wide.
Her eyelids quiver, then reveal
The awe and wonder they conceal.
With throbbing heart and flushing cheek --
All powerless to think or speak—
Observant, rapt and motionless,
She sits, like ancient prophetess,
Awaiting in the sacred shrine
The awful oracle divine.

Whether some power of earth or air
Had left its mystic impress there ;

Some fay or sprite, in ling'ring near,
Had breathed the music in her ear ;
Or whether, as she lightly slept,
Some subtle influence round her crept,
And—Reason, for the time, dethroned—
Each wand'ring sense no sov'reign owned,
But, mingling their fantastic hues,
A light delusive did diffuse,
In which, distinctly seen and heard,
Came vision bright and whispered word ;
She questions not.

One startled look
She casts around on bank and brook—
Adown the path and on the fell,
Whose rugged form she knows so well—
With parted lips and straining sense,
Picture of startled innocence ;
Or like some nymph beside the stream,
Awakened from a blissful dream
By stranger step or presence rude
Which dares to break her solitude :
Then, starting, with a single bound
She lights, like bird, upon the ground.

No single instant does she stay ;
But, darting cross the rocky way,

Climbs deftly up the further bank,
O'erhung with verdure rich and dank,
Just where adown the mossy walls
In countless tiny waterfalls
The brooklet glides from stone to stone
In sweet and endless monotone.
Nor does she cease her rapid flight
Until—a dear and welcome sight—
Within an aged granddame's arms
She refuge finds from all alarms.



Canto IV.

THE MOUNTAIN-COT.

Beneath where splintered rocks protrude
Some hand had raised a cabin rude ;
Though partly hut, and partly cave,
It yet a homelike shelter gave,
And lent to age and childhood sweet
A peaceful and secure retreat.

The walls were formed of turf and stone
Where the dark rock gave bulwark none.
O'erhead, the sloping rafters bore
A roof of thatch ; the earthen floor,
Though cold and bare, was trim and neat
And daily trod by patient feet.
The door, which all could ope at will,
Betrayed a certain rustic skill,
As, free, between its posts it hung
And loosely on its hinges swung ;

And, guiltless all of bolt or stay,
Ne'er failed the wand'rer on his way.

In summer, o'er the rude porch meet
The climbing roses fresh and sweet,
With honeysuckle, rich and rare,
Dispensing perfume on the air.
In winter, when upon the hill
The murmur of the brook is still,
And all the fragrant blossoms, strewn—
Like cherished friends, all dead and gone—
No longer cheer the cabin lone :
When, yielding to the northern blast,
The trees their leafy crowns have cast ;
Save the dull firs and steadfast pines,
Whose changeless aspect ne'er declines :
When snow upon the path lies deep,
And, week by week, the rugged steep
Is trodden by no friendly form
With word of cheer from out the storm :
Then hath the outcast ne'er in vain
Pleaded his hunger, cold, or pain ;
Or failed within its walls to find
A shelter from the piercing wind,
Too oft less cruel than his kind.

How is it that in homes like this
We find so much of truest bliss ?
A peaceful calm—a cheerfulness,
Which stately mansions rarely bless ?
How oft from poverty will spring
Content which riches cannot bring !
How oft the meanest hut doth know
True charity's most generous flow ;
And ready gift from peasant's board
Shame the slow alms from Dives' hoard !
Is it that they who sparest live
Learn best how sweet it is to give ?
That, aye, the self-indulgent soul
Gains smallest good—gives meanest dole ?

Alike, in sunshine or in cloud—
In summer's wreaths or winter's shroud,
The little hut, so lone and still,
Maintained its place beside the hill.
Th' unflinching rock, like friend well tried,
Defense and comfort still supplied :
It broke the fury of the blast,
And in its arms embraced it fast ;
Bore snow and rain upon its crest,
And gave it warmth from out its breast ;
And, when upon the thirsty glade

The torrid breezes hotly played,
A coolness lent and grateful shade.

Retired, the simple dwelling stood
A stone-cast from the mountain road,
Whence but a devious path upwound
Where crags and tangled shrubs abound.
Its presence nothing did disclose
But curling smoke-wreaths, which uprose
And, circling in the atmosphere,
Betrayed some habitation near.

The cabin-rooms were two in all,
With rustic porch instead of hall;
The outer, though of higher state—
Parlor and kitchen—knew no grate.
Yet from that low hearth's genial blaze
Came warmth and cheer in dreariest days;
As, flick'ring with uncertain gleam,
It shadows chased from beam to beam.
No need to tell the treasures scant
Which yet did meet each actual want;
The table, and the pallet-bed
With snowy coverlet o'erspread;
The few rush chairs, the chimney shelf
Which bore its proud display of delf;

Not all of modest earthenware,
But here and there some relic rare,
Speaking of unforgotten times
To the sad heart, like distant chimes.

Here, 'neath the shelter of the hill,
Two forms had found a haven, still—
The one in childhood's sweetest prime,
The other bowed by care and time—
Unnoted save by that keen Eye
Whose piercing gaze naught can defy;
But which alike on each doth fall,
And lets its mercy light on all:
Not only on the giant oak,
Which proudly scorns the thunder-stroke;
But on the wild-flower, by the lea
Content to nestle timidly.

What marked resemblance oft we see
Betwixt old age and infancy!
When not one line of care is traced,
Or every furrow is effaced:
When all is bright with life's first bloom,
Or with the light beyond the tomb:
When reigns the calm the strife before,
Or the sweet peace when conflict's o'er.

E'en so, between old age and youth—
The two extremes, where love and truth
Are found with least of earth's alloy,
And meet with least of life's annoy—
The confines of life's narrow sea,
Embosom'd in eternity—
We see full oft a trust complete—
Communion, perfect, pure and sweet.

And thus it was with those who found
A home within the narrow bound
Which that rude peasant-hut supplied,
Safe shelter'd in the bleak hillside.
Despite disparity of years—
Childhood's bright hopes and age's fears,
It seemed as if no earthly strain
Could part the ties which held these twain.
Each to the full tide of content
That filled both hearts, all willing, lent
Her individual complement;
And bore her share to that sweet whole
Of peace which reigned in either soul.

If on the bowed and weary head
Time had its hoar-frost thickly spread,

It had not dimmed the fearless eye
Nor marred the contour of the face ;
Nor from the figure's symmetry
Detracted all of that sweet grace,
Which in the zenith of her pride,
Ere she did reign a peerless bride,
Had won her husband's roving eye
To life-long, fond idolatry.

Like some rare, graceful column, wrought
By tasteful hand, and richly dight,
Which, to an early ruin brought,
Must yet, perforce, but charm the sight,
And even in its ruin show
The splendor which it once did know ;
So every look and gesture told
Of former state—of lineage old,
And rarely failed that to reveal
Which prudence oft would fain conceal.

So in the child, low at her feet,
Whose slender arms embrace her knee,
A charming miniature complete
Of one who smiles on her, we see ;
For in that childlike form combine
Distinctive features of each line

Of whose commingled progeny
Sole representative is she.

Saxon her ruddy hair and face,
And Frank her figure's slender grace,
With all its suppleness and ease—
Her sweet and winning coquetries.
She had her mother's orbs of blue,
And tender heart and simple faith;
Her father's spirit, pure and true,
Which never knew dishonor's breath;
Which never failed a friend in need,
Or sacrificed his fame for greed.

But spite of many a lingering trace,
As oft is seen, of mingled race;
And spite of all the lapse of years
And furnace-fires of trial and pain,
The list'ner in the child appears
Restored to youthfulness again.
While in the matron, sear, we see
The child of half a century.

And as she tells her simple tale—
With cheeks, now flushed, now deathly pale,
With catching breath, dilating eye
And tones of deepest mystery—

The hearer feels a numbness creep
O'er every sense—through every limb,
As Eli felt, when roused from sleep
Within the sacred temple, dim,
To hear the youthful prophet tell
The awful doom he knew too well.

Perchance, within the vision bright
She sees a deeper meaning lie—
A beam from Heaven sent to light
The gloomy path of destiny :
A message, fraught with meaning clear
At least for one sad, waiting ear.

Anon, she soothes with accents kind
The tumult of the troubled mind.
She tells how, in the ages past—
When night her sable mantle cast
O'er all the world, and slumber sealed
The eyes of men—had God revealed
Unto His chosen ones of old
His providences manifold.

She tells of Bethel's traveler, lone,
But pillowed on the dewy stone,
And pictures to the child's rapt sight
The glitt'ring throng of angels bright :

How Joseph read the will divine
In Pharaoh's lean and favored kine :
How, led by dreams, the Virgin mild
To Egypt bore the Holy Child
Until the tyrant's course was sped :
How, o'er the martyr's dying head
The op'ning heav'ns their glory shed,
Changing his last expiring cry
To highest strain of ecstasy :
How, by such means, the Father still
 His children guides from heav'n above—
Makes them, unconscious, yet fulfill
 His marv'lous purposes of love.

And as the throbbing ocean yields
 To the sweet hush of eventide,
Till o'er its boundless azure fields
 The boist'rous waves at last subside ;
So yields the child's revealed distress
Beneath her voice and soft caress.
Inspired now with purpose high,
As conscious of her ministry,
She seeks once more the rocky way,
Prepared the summons to obey.

* * * * *

Ah! blesséd faith that childhood owns—
Too little prized—too early lost ;
But when our bread has turned to stones
We see at what a bitter cost
Was bought the freedom we would gain
At any price of future pain.
'Tis only when upon the shoals,
Or when the deadly reef's in sight,
We learn the need, for human souls,
Of some celestial beacon light,
To guide us through the billows' strife
To haven of a peaceful life.



Canto V.

LA BELLE FRANCE.

Among the records of old France—
The abode of genius and romance ;
The ancient home of chivalry
And grace and old-time courtesy ;
Whose varied pages, darkly fair,
Are full of transformations rare ;
Whose glorious victories, grave defeats,
The scroll of History still repeats—
Among those records, dread as night,
Too foul to bear the day's clear light,
Is that which tells the destiny
Of Vicomte Floribel de Luys.

The victim of a kinsman's hate
And envious spleen and jealous rage,
We can but parallel his fate
In such a clime and such an age.

Arraigned on charge of heresy—
The vengeance of the Papal See
Invoked upon his guiltless head,
His country and his home he fled.
Robbed of his wealth and *acres fair*—
His title-deeds and infant heir,
Only at peril of his life
He found safe harborage for his wife,
Then vanished from her hiding-place,
But anxious to remove all trace
That might betray the chosen spot
And make her sharer of his lot.

* * * * *

Marv'lous the history of that land,
Replete with contradictions grand!
Renowned alike through all the earth
For wildest frenzy—lightest mirth;
Prolific in the arts of life,
Yet favored scene of civil strife;
Whose children, in the bitter school
Of tyranny and long misrule,
Have in this latter century known
The awful fruit of ill seed sown;
Reaping in agony and tears
The harvest of a thousand years,

And in the purple vintage trod
Beholding the avenging rod
Of an all-just, all-seeing God.

“ How long ? How long ? ” The cry how vain
From spirits chafing 'neath the chain,
As through the changeless years that roll
The iron eats into the soul !
Till bosoms which in silence bore
Full many a painful, festering sore
Without a single moan or plaint,
Madden'd at length past all restraint,
Gave to a fury, too long pent,
A terrible and sudden vent ;
And made the startled sky, serene,
Witness of many an awful scene—
The “ Commune ” and the guillotine.

How sad to scan, in ages dark,
The *régime* of the “ grand monarque ! ”
Th' exactions of the old “ noblesse ; ”
The tyranny without redress ;
The uncontrolled licentiousness,
Which spared no home in search of prey
And flaunted in the light of day :
When, fallen from her high estate,
The Church, the minion of the great,

No more to virtue shelter gave,
But trampled upon Freedom's grave;
And, faithless to her mission high—
Engine of bitter cruelty—
In iron fetters bound the soul
And sought the conscience to control,
Making religion in each eye
Synonymous with tyranny.

Who can, unmoved, such scenes recall—
Enough the stoutest to appall—
Nor feel amid the gath'ring gloom
Forebodings of approaching doom?
The shadows of the dread Bastille;
The ghastly horrors they conceal;
“Lettres de cachet;” the noisome cell;
The nameless grave; the un~~w~~rung knell;
The dungeon floor, thro' long years trod;
The fruitless prayers upsent to God;
The deep-drawn sighs; the bitter groans,
Unheard beneath these pond'rous stones;
The imprecations loud and deep,
Suppress'd and stifled but to sleep
Until the dawn of hope should break
And vengeance overwhelming wake:

Must these cry ever from the dust
Nor wake a retribution just ?

Fearful th' accumulated rage
Thus nursed and fed thro' many an age !
Which in its all-consuming ire
Distinguished naught 'twixt son and sire ;
But, in one common sacrifice
To outraged Justice, bitter cries,
Doomed innocence and guilt alike
To dungeon, block and sword and pike,
And left upon the land a stain
Which must through centuries remain.
Who that recalls such scenes as these,
But in such consummation sees
The dire effects of saddest cause—
The breach of God's and Nature's laws.



Canto VI.

MARIE DE LUYS.

Victim of cruel tyranny,
In covert lay Marie de Luys,
All breathless, like the hunted fawn,
Awaiting freedom's blesséd dawn.
Some time, within her safe retreat,
She bore her lot with patience sweet.
But when long months had glided by,
Fretting with care her spirit high,
And still no single message bore
Its comfort to her bosom sore
From him, her only tie to life,
She wearied of the endless strife.
She dried her eyes of useless tears ;
Despair grew stronger than her fears :
And, as the life-boat trims its sail
To tempt the billow and the gale

Some shipwrecked mariner to save
From painful death and watery grave,
She left her haven, safe, to seek—
How strong is faith in woman weak!—
Throughout the world with effort wild
Some tidings of her spouse and child.
Despite the Inquisition dread—
Despite the price upon her head,
With instinct true and purpose high
She dared th' unequal strife to try
With courage born of agony.

Ah! who shall tell in fitting song
Her dauntless courage—journeyings long?
The bitter cup 'twas hers to drain
Of mingled hardship and of pain?
The burden of the cross she bore—
In spirit strong—in body faint—
Nor uttered in her anguish sore
One single murmur of complaint?
'Tis not alone the Master sweet
Must tread those paths with bleeding feet;
But in each human life must be
Some semblance of Gethsemane.

But little need to seek disguise
To render strange to human eyes

The reigning beauty of a court—
The queen of many a tilt and sport—
The youthful maiden in her pride—
The glittering courtier's peerless bride.
'Tis not alone the hand of Time
That marreth beauty ere its prime ;
That steals the fresh cheek's tender bloom,
And leaves the pallor of the tomb ;
Blanches the locks and bows the frame,
And dims the dark eye's liquid flame.
Anguish and pain—consuming cares
Form ordeal more cruel than "shares,"
O'er which the patient victim trod,
Appealing from mankind to God.

Thus, in her agonized distress,
But little of youth's loveliness
Clung to the sad, bereavéd form,
As forth she went to brave the storm
Of human hate and human guile,
And set against each Papal wile
Her woman's purpose, strong and true—
Let come what may, to die or do.

Who, in that weak and shrunken frame—
That cheek to which no color came ;

That silvering and disheveled hair,
Once dark as night and dressed with care ;
Those sunken eyes whose proud light shone
Amid the brightest round a throne ;
That humble garb, in which arrayed,
Her way throughout the land she made—
The fair and high-born bride could see
Of Vicomte Floribel de Luys ?

Full often, helpless and forlorn,
She started forth at early dawn
Persistent in her lofty quest,
Hope still alive within her breast.
Full often, with the setting sun—
Another long day's journey done—
She paused, a suppliant, before
Some kindly peasant's humble door,
To gain the needed food and rest
For body faint and soul opprest.
Though still sufficed her little hoard
For simple lodging—scanty board,
But rarely would her host receive
The modest sum her pride would give :
She bore her passport in her face—
Her sadden'd air and nameless grace ;
And frequent kindnesses, unbought,

As tribute to her grief were brought,
While oft was benediction sought.

How many a town and village street
Was trodden by those weary feet
Within the space of one brief year
Will ne'er be told in human ear.
The foes with which she had to deal
Were keen and cold, as polished steel,
And knew no mercy in their zeal.
The quenchless wrath she dared to brave
Paused not at confines of the grave ;
But followed on, relentless still,
Lacking the power but not the will
The soul's eternal peace to kill.

Like one of old who dared to cast
The awful thunderbolts of Jove,
It ruthless sought to blight and blast
The sweetest fruits of truth and love.
The dark recesses of the tomb,
Round which the flowers of pity bloom—
Which hold the withered hopes of years—
If consecrate alone with tears,
Could guard no proudest earthly name
Nor shield the purest earthly fame ;

But, 'neath those curses, deep and dread,
Gave e'en the memory of the dead—
Condemned through all posterity—
To never-ending infamy.

'Tis wonderful what patient faith,
Allied with courage firm and true,
In noble life or constant death,
For highest ends can dare and do !
When in our erring eyes most weak,
It seems from higher source to seek
A strength beyond all human power,
To meet the crisis of the hour ;
And, in the triumphs it achieves,
Room only for our wonder leaves.

Witness its power, ye prison doors !
Behind whose bolts all hope hath fled ;
Ye cold and silent dungeon floors !
Which echoed to her gentle tread.
Witness, ye reeking cells ! which, sealed
By monarch's signet, yet revealed
To her keen eyes your secret woe
And made her pity overflow.
Witness, ye warders ! brave and stern,
Whose purpose strong no foes could turn ;

Who—ev'ry hope of safety lost—
Would perish, faithful, at your post ;
Who, proof alike 'gainst gold and fears,
Were melted by a woman's tears.

Bear witness, too, ye convent walls,
And silent cloisters pale and dim !
Whose tranquil gloom the soul enthralls,
Where falls the sound of vesper hymn :
Where many a storm-tost soul hath found
A haven from life's troubled sea,
And in devotion's endless round
A sweet, if dull, monotony.
Guarded with strict and jealous care,
The timid flock, safe folded there—
Condemn'd to utmost privacy—
Subject to closest scrutiny—
What hope of access, if unmeet,
Within such sacred, still retreat ?

Yet hath its aspect, gloomy—cold,
No terrors for a spirit bold,
Since in the strictest devotee
Still lingers something womanly ;
A tender pity for distress—
Compassion sweet for loneliness,

And sympathy for cares that vex
The best or weakest of her sex.

And so it is, the generous heart
Least mindful of its inward smart—
The spirit that for private vice
Demands the highest sacrifice—
Most gently deal with sin and woe,
And readiest charity bestow.

Thus, though each ward all rigidly
 Stood forth the convent lock within,
Would Pity turn the willing key
 And let the weary wand'rer in;
Sole refuge there in all the world
For one from fame and fortune hurled.

Full often, as a pilgrim saint—
 And saint she was in very deed—
Or, oftener, as a wand'rer faint,
 She gained relief in time of need.
Sometimes, but as a child of shame,
 Admittance only could she find,
Where some small, faint and flickering flame
 Of hope would lead her eager mind.
Sinner or saint, it mattered not—
Her spirit pure knew stain nor blot:

Alike she bore the look of scorn—
The rev'rent gaze, of pity born —
The blessing of the agéd priest—
His prayer that, “from all sin releas'd,
Her troubled spirit might find peace
And all her weary wanderings cease.”
One purpose only in her mind,
She left all other care behind,
And entrance only sought to gain
Where—living, dying or in pain—
In the loved objects of her soul,
She yet might find her hope's bright goal.



Canto VII.

THE LADY ABBESS.

The ancient village of Drépigné
Lifts from the vale its towers gray
Just as it did in the years gone by,
Though shorn of its former dignity.
Like warrior old, it boasts its scars,
Gained in the endless border wars
Ere it fell to the greedy Franks a prey,
Yielding itself to a stranger's sway,
Till another turn of Fortune's wheel—
Whether for woe, or whether for weal—
Should see once more the prize restored,
By the refluent tide of the Saxon horde,
To the ancient rule of a German lord.

Little of state or grandeur now
It boasts, as it looks from the gentle brow

Of the swelling hill, on whose lowly crest
The peaceful walls of a convent rest.
Endow'd by the gift of a perished race,
It holds within its close embrace
A school and orphanage, trim and neat,
Where shame and poverty yet may meet,
For their friendless offspring, with safe retreat,
In the midst of this fair, sequestered vale
Where rural plenty and peace prevail.

The earthen ramparts, long o'erthrown,
With clinging verdure and moss o'ergrown,
Furnish a pleasance safe and meet
For lightsome gambols of youthful feet ;
As over again, in mimic show,
The lads will storm from the moat below—
Now a tangled mass of reeds and fern—
The crumbling keep where, fierce and stern,
The deadly conflict once did rage
In those border fights which, many a page,
Darkened and stained, in that distant age.

A ruined chateau, long decayed,
Still lends a charm to the verdant glade:
Its princely owners, of lands bereft,
Years since th' ancestral home had left ;

And—be it by right, or be it by guile—
The Church now owns for many a mile
The goodly champaign, wide and fair,
Which knows, it is said, no living heir;
And thus it is that, for lands and gold,
Few do a richer dower hold
Than the convent and school of the “order gray”
In the ancient village of Drépigné.

* * * * *

Hard by the old gray convent wall,
Under the poplars straight and tall,
Clad in her sombre garb of gray,
The Lady Abbess was wont to stray
In the deep’ning shade of the parting day.
Whether she simply mused—or prayed,
Perhaps she herself could scarce have said,
For hither and thither thought will fly,
As gossamer floats in summer sky—
Now uprising—now descending—
Feeling ever the impulse lending.
’Tis hard by simply “telling a bead”
Such volatile matter as thought to lead—
Subject to every kind of emotion—
In the sacred channel of deep devotion.

The Abbess, for all her tranquil mood,
Was yet, we know, but flesh and blood ;
And under the snow-white bands that crossed
Her woman's breast, was a woman's heart,
Like many another, tempest-tossed—

Conquered, it may be, only in part.
Fasting and prayer will curb desire,
Yet still will smoulder the hidden fire,
Though rarely may rise its potent breath
From the chamber of throbbing flesh beneath ;
For the Past is ever hard to forget,
And it needs to watch by the embers yet.

Noble in mien and noble by birth,
With a history none will read on earth,
Worsted too soon in the early strife,
She had taken the vows of a celibate life.
How soon—how late the yearning came

For a freedom lost, we ne'er may know ;
Since never yet the forbidden flame
Has shed on her path its lurid glow.

Quiet and cheerful, she wends her way,
Bearing her burden day by day :
In vigils and prayers her life is spent ;
Scarcely the needful care is lent

To physical ease and physical health,
For body and soul, and talent and wealth
Were long since vowed to the life now led—
An off'ring fair on the altar spread;
And of all the "order" most famed was she
For penance, for prayers, for charity.

Is it she never dares to stay
The ceaseless round from day to day?
Is it she fears the brief release,
Should the constant strain one instant cease
And leave the struggling spirit free?
'Tis well, no mortal the springs may see,
And that mind is to mind a mystery!
We only know, what all knew well—
What ev'ry mother her child would tell;
That over mountain and over moor,
In princely hall or cabin poor,
There is not one but holds her dear,
All thro' the country, far and near;
And never ceases to bless, and pray
For the saintly lady who still holds sway.
O'er the convent and school of Drépigné.

But from the conclave whence bishop and priest
Control the "order," this much at least

Had managed to leak from some cranny out,
And—as such things are—was wafted about;
That her heart was all too tender and true
For many a work an abbess should do.
She might lash herself with a scourge of steel,
But pity for others she yet must feel;
She listened too oft to the tale of woe—
Was moved too soon by the tear's o'erflow;
She let the sinner too lightly depart,
And counted as penance the broken heart;
That—whether in want, in sin, or shame—
A sister was yet a sister the same.

Doubtless, many a fitter tool
For church behest and convent rule
Could readily here or there be found,
In those dark days, the country round;
And more than once was the question mooted,
“Could not the abbey be better suited?”
But, spite of a frequent check and frown,
She had long since lived such efforts down;
Her rank, her wealth, her spotless fame,
Had proved a strong, resistless claim,
And left her supreme in her calm domain
In that ancient village of fair Lorraine.

If thus, commercing with the sky,
There would yet escape for earth a sigh;
And if the spirit at times would beat
Against the walls of its still retreat;
None but itself, wounded and sore,
Could tell of the secret pain it bore;
For, under that calm and peaceful mien,
Never a single trace was seen.
As over the crater the grass grows green
Where Nature's mightiest throes have been,
So years of penance and vigil had press'd
On those proud features their stamp of rest.

Saintly Abbess of Drépigné,
Thine indeed the more excellent way!
More truly than holy bishop or priest
Hast thou fathomed the mind of the blesséd Christ
The God who suffered—the Man who died—
The great, true Heart of The Crucified.

* * * * *

In the convent chapel, hoar and dim,
The nuns are singing the Vesper hymn;
Rising and falling in dirge-like strain,
The holy words fall clear and plain
On the ear of a wand'rer, faint and lone,
Resting awhile by the cold gray stone:

“ PRO MISERICORDIA SUPPLICIUM.

“ Pater potentissime—

Jesu carissime—

Nostri miserere !

Spiritus almissime—

Deus sanctissime—

Nostri miserere !

“ Judex exorabilis—

Salvator amabilis—

Nostri miserere !

Consolator mirabilis—

Deus laudabilis—

Nostri miserere !

“ Diurno periculo—

Nocturno cubiculo—

Nostri miserere !

In vitæ sæculo—

In mortis articulo—

Nostri miserere !”

Like voices from the distant Past,

Those holy words so sweetly sung,

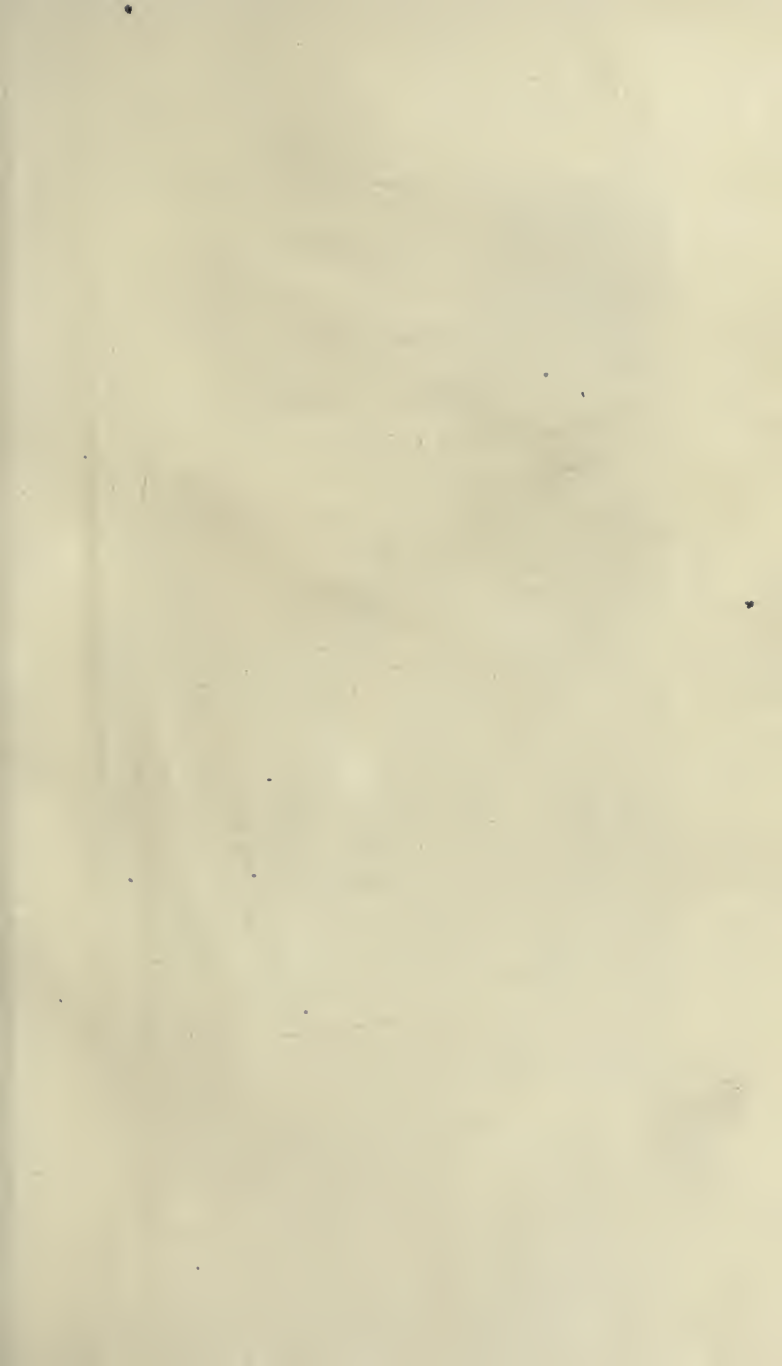
When ev'ry pulse with hope beat fast—

When heart was light and spirit young.

What are the echoes, soft and low,
They wake in the silent depths below,
As the list'ner hangs on the dying strain,
Craving those liquid notes again,
As the pilgrim, parched, on arid plain?
Glist'ning tears, in her dark eyes shining,
Gleam, like stars, through the evening haze,
Telling 'mid gloom of Hope's declining
Of vanished joys of early days.

A silent foot-fall upon the grass—
A shadow upon the cold, gray stone;
A sudden thrill, as oft will pass
When the spirit feels 'tis not alone;
Accents subdued, yet sweet and clear,
As move the very soul to hear;
A kindly hand on the weary head
By storms so cruelly buffeted:

“ Daughter, the evening air is chill;
You are weary climbing the rugged hill.
Rest awhile in our calm retreat,
And find in our convent shelter meet.
You are spent with hunger— move with pain,
Unused, no doubt, to such a strain.





"That is my dear, is the little woman."
"How do you do, my dear?"

—Chapter VII

Too slightly fashion'd your tender frame—
Nay, shrink not ! I ask nor state, nor name.
By no such coin need traveler pay
For food and rest in Drépigné."

Her loving speech, like Gilead's balm,
Falls on the spirit, faint, which hears ;
Freighted, it seems, with a holy calm,
Leaving unstirred the jealous fears.
She takes the hand—in womanly ruth
Laid on her weary, drooping head—
Still fresh with the delicate hue of youth,
And light and soft, as the snow-flake shed.
Lifted in prayer, or laden with dole,
It bears the charm of a loving soul.
Ne'er had it needless burden laid,
Nor ever a sacred trust betrayed ;
Those aye were blessed it sought to bless,
And its very touch, in the heart's distress,
Came like a tender, soft caress.



Canto VIII.

THE SECRET DISCOVERED.

A child of sorrow, want or shame—
Unasked her lineage, state or name—
The lady Abbess' wish expressed
Gains for the wanderer food and rest.
“Rest? Rest?” Alas! Where is it found?
Not in the convent's endless round
Can wifely longing be supplied
Or a mother's yearnings be satisfied.
Only on earth, if love be given
Its long-sought prize: if not, in Heaven.

Ah! who could see the craving look
That passionless face so quickly took,
As, under the shade of that convent gray,
She watched th' unconscious babes at play,

And fail to tell that a mother's heart
Beat strong and wild in that aching breast,
Which never should see its longing part
Till its pulse should be for aye at rest?

And if to the Abbess' watchful eyes
That sight first brought a mute surprise,
'Twas changed full soon to a glad content;
For a sickness fell on the little fold,
And soon were the faithful sisters spent,
Watching alike the young and old,
And a willing helper were pleased to see
In such a dire extremity.

And as they marked her patience rare,
Marvelous skill and tender care;
The magical power of tone and touch,
As over the moaning sufferer's couch
She bent, like an angel of peace and love
From the heaven of mercy and grace above;
None but acknowledged, from envy free,
The tact and skill of Sœur Marie;
For by such name, and such alone,
Was the stranger guest in the convent known.

And still, as the summer grew, the heat
On those rolling plains more fiercely beat.

The sluggish winds refused to blow
From the distant ranges, capt with snow ;
Nor bore to the parchéd lips and brow
The fresh air, never so craved as now,
When the fever-fires that raged beneath
Withered and scorched, like furnace breath.
E'en in the convent, high, and free

To every blast from the arching heaven,
With its walls of solid masonry,

No grateful coolness yet was given.

Night and day were wild heads tost

Hither and thither on restless pillows,

Like hopeless vessels, their rudder lost,

Which rise and fall with the heaving billows.

* * * * *

The day is gone—the lights are dim

In the fever-ward at Drépigné ;

And an awe is felt, for a shadow, grim,

Hangs, like a pall, from day to day.

Again and again, with noiseless tread,

Has the silent messenger come and gone ;

Another cot vacant, and in its stead,

In the convent yard, another stone.

The night is fair—the moon is high,
Round and bright in a cloudless sky ;
So bright that the goodliest planet pales
In the sea of space where she, peerless, sails.
So clear her light that one may trace
Each line of pain in the sufferer's face,
Or read from the missal the ev'ning prayer.
Ah! all too still the scene, and fair ;
And all too deadly the burden'd air,
When only the gracious wind and rain
Can end the season of fear and pain.

Long trained, 'twould seem, to vigil and fast,
 Needing but little of change or rest ;
First to come and lingering last,
 By no toil subdued—no heat opprest,
One silent figure is bending yet
 O'er a tiny cot near the casement free,
Parting the clustering curls of jet
 And wiping the forehead tenderly.
A beautiful child, with classic face
 Such as the antique sculptures wear ;
A freak of nature, or of a race
 Crowned with an order of beauty rare,
That for pride of person and mien might mate
With the highest in any land or state.

Scarce had a second summer shed,
Its fragrant blossoms o'er that fair head,
But already, in view of the envious tomb,
Had gathered dark omens of early doom.
Hour by hour, the pulse beat quicker—
Day by day, deeper and thicker
The black, impalpable, pitiless cloud,
Waiting that failing form to shroud.

Who was he? Whence was he? None could tell,
For convent walls kept their secrets well;
And no venial sin it was to pry,
In those dark days long since gone by,
Into many a painful mystery.

Now and anon through that tender frame
A thrill of sharper suffering came:
The little patient would writhe and groan,
Touching the heart with pitiful moan,
Or fling his arms, or flash his eyes,
And strive from the clinging arms to rise;
Till soon, the fruitless conflict o'er,
He'd sink on the faithful breast once more,
So pale and rigid—so calm and still,
'Twould seem that Death had had his fill.

Just such a spasm had come and gone,
And Sœur Marie was watching alone.
The terrible struggle overpast,
Drooped the weary head at last
As fell the sad tears, thick and fast,
Over the little form, opprest,
And the pain-drawn features now at rest.
To quicken the blood's returning tide
She bears the child to the casement wide,
Praying for one faint breath of air
To summon the life to those features fair.

As the silv'ry moonlight, flick'ring, falls
On those delicate lines, once more at peace,
What is it that memory fond, recalls—
That makes her very pulse to cease?
That bids her hope, when hope is dead,
And cling to a Past forever fled?

With trembling fingers she bares the breast
Where the little heart so feebly beats.
On what does her gaze so wildly rest?
What is that sign her vision greets?
Naught but a little purple stain—
A stain, as of wine, on the shoulder white,
But gleaming forth, distinct and plain,
Dagger-shaped, in the sheeny light.

She staggers—she reels! An instant more,
The convent walls had thrill'd to a cry
As only comes from a spirit sore
In the hour of deepest agony;
When excess of joy, or pain, or grief
Finds in such voice a swift relief.

But quick and sharp the warning flies,
As 'cross the heavens the lightning's gleam,
That, one such cry, and the new-found prize
Would elude the grasp, like an empty dream.
Wonderful instinct! true and strong,
Needing no reas'ning process long,
But reaching the goal with single bound
Or ever another aid be found.

No cry is heard; but, ah! the strain
In that quiv'ring frame shews all too plain.
The ashen pallor of brow and cheeks—
The swollen veins, like leaden streaks—
The eyes, transfixed—expressionless—
Picture the spirit's mute distress.
Then one convulsive, sudden throb—
A long—long sigh, more like a sob,

And a bountiful rush of blessed tears,
 Bearing away on its gen'rous tide
All the sorrow and care of years
 Into the waste of waters wide.

Eagerly, fondly, fiercely prest
In the close embrace of that loving breast,
'Twould seem from that warm fount of life
Fresh strength was drawn for the bitter strife.
Certain it is, from that same hour
There came a virtue, or healing power
To the feeble frame on the very brink
Of the grave to which it seemed doomed to sink.
Breasting the force of Death's dark flood,
Like him of old, she bravely "stood
Between the living and the dead,"
And once again "the plague was stayed."

Can it be that love hath power to stay
 The heav'nward path of the parting breath?
That aught but the pow'r divine, his prey
 Can snatch from the cruel grasp of Death?
Or can it reverse the dread decree?
Or plead for a special clemency?

Unuttered though the stifled cry
That, on the wings of night upborne,
Had told to the whole community
Of a long-lost hope's most blessed dawn ;
It had not failed that eye had seen,
In one so calm, the tempest wrought,
Or of that struggle witness been,
With but one meaning surely fraught.
The lady Abbess, in nightly round,
Had never shunned the sick and pained ;
Each had in her a mother found,
And ready sympathy had gained.
Ah ! not a *mother's*, since, perforce,
From no terrestrial, human source
But has maternal anguish known
Has love, maternal, ever flown.

* * * * *

In the convent chapel, still and lone,
Prostrate before the altar of stone—
Where stands the Virgin Mother, mild,
And in her arms the Holy Child—
A suppliant figure mutely bends—
Upward her pleading glances sends.
Her hair dishevel'd, disorder'd dress,
Witness her spirit's sore distress,

E'en as the inward, stifled moan,
Burden'd, it seemed, with sadder tone
For the anguish within the bosom pent
Which might not find itself a vent.

Ah! for the spirit, pure and true,
Only anxious the right to do ;
When a wall of darkness seems to hide
The path before, and on either side
Duty and love the heart divide.

Is there a spot 'twixt right and wrong,
Bound by a line so thin and fine
That, e'en when the motive's pure and strong,
The path of duty is hard to define ?
Where early training and early creed
May fill the mind with so deep a haze,
Or such distrust of self may breed
As to render the road a trackless maz ?

Reared from a child in convent school,
Under the Church's sacred rule ;
To all her edicts taught to bow,
And loyal to her order's solemn vow ;

Yet dowered with heart so sensitive
To the tender claims of pity and love,
That e'en reproof she needs must give
To sorrow the gentle soul would move;
What wonder oft her path was drear,
Since out of the darkened heav'n above
There came no voice, in accents clear,
Proclaiming love duty, and duty love;
That, of all the holy and blessed Three,
The greatest and sweetest is Charity.

"Only a sign—one little sign;
Some outward act—some voice within"—
She pleads with tears at the sacred shrine—
"To keep the conscience free from sin :"
The slightest change in the marble face,
Chiseled with exquisite taste and skill,
In which the suppliant yet might trace
With eye of faith the Father's will.

Dare she list to the mute appeal
Of that moon-lit scene in the convent ward?
Or must she, stern as the pitiless steel,
Slay the bright hope by Heaven restored?

Dare she list to the tender yearning
That seems to rise from her inmost soul ?
Or, like some false fire, fiercely burning,
Must it yield at once to sharp control ?

“ O Virgin Mother ! whose tender breast
Was pierced and torn by the cruel sword,
When sadly thy weeping eyes did rest
On the bleeding form of thy Son and Lord.
Thou who, in virgin purity,
Didst bear the pangs of maternity !
Say, in the light of the Holy Heaven,
Is not a mother's love full claim
To the helpless offspring by Nature given,
E'en though it bear the brand of shame ? ”

* * * * *

Hour by hour she pleads and prays—
Hither and thither her purpose sways ;
But still, in the faint and flick'ring flame,
No answering glow on that visage came.
Cold and beautiful still, as the dead
From whom all passion of life hath fled,
The sacred sculpture gazed below
And mutely smiled on her pain and woe.
Still from within no answer, clear,
Came to the suppliant spirit's ear :

But when the sun with its rising beams
Once more o'er the earth in beauty shone,
The mother lay wrapt in golden dreams
With a soul at peace, but the child—was gone.



Canto IX.

LES BASSES ALPES.

O fairest land of liberty !
Where, like the bounding chamois, free,
A mountain people have maintained
The priceless boon of freedom, gained
By noblest deeds of courage high
Through many a bygone century :
Where on each rugged mountain steep
And in each lonely, still recess,
The bones of many a patriot sleep
'Mid Nature's grandest loveliness,
And the rude blasts that hurry by
Chant an unending elegy.
O fairest land of glittering heights !
Whose varied hue the eye delights ;

Where, nestling 'neath thy mountain crests,
Thy hamlets fair, like eagles' nests,
Hang in the blue immensity
A thousand feet above the sea,
And through whose winding vales are seen
Thy peaceful homes 'mid pastures green.

O fairest land ! whose wilds have been
Witness of many a bloody scene—
Whose proud achievements, clothed in song,
Shall echo through the ages long :
Down whose defiles, so dark and deep,
The fearful avalanches sweep,
No swifter in their sheer descent,
Or wider in their ruin lent,
Than thy brave sons, when in their wrath
They stayed the proud invader's path ;
And with the weapons Nature gave
Made for their foes one common grave
'Neath rocks and trees, in fury hurled,
As from their roots by tempest whirled,
Making astounded Europe see
Humbled, her proudest chivalry,
Before thy free-born peasantry.

What though thy peaks can ne'er forego
Their crowns of everlasting snow :
What though thy glaciers, wide and deep,
Like doom itself, resistless creep;
And through thy craggy wilds the blast
All pitilessly hurries past,
And Nature in her sternest moods
Is seen in thy vast solitudes :
Yet, when the gath'ring storms are o'er
And on thy realms she smiles once more,
What land on earth can equal thine
In all the beauties which combine
To make it in the traveler's eyes
A perfect earthly paradise ?

When all thy glitt'ring mountain peaks
The rosy morning faintly streaks,
Or evening sheds its crimson glow
Upon their robes of driven snow :
When, first, returning smiles of Spring
Life to thy frozen torrents bring,
And, flashing each from hidden cell,
They, joyful, leap from rock and fell
Or, like the captive, just unbound,
Fill all the balmy air around
With their glad song's rejoicing sound :

When from the valleys at their feet
Winter withdraws her winding sheet,
And all thy hills and dells are seen
Bedecked once more in vivid green :
When in each most sequestered nook
Is heard the voice of bird and brook ;
And even on the rocky ledge,
Beside the chilly glacier's edge,
The timid wild-flower yet doth dare
To spread its blossoms soft and fair :
When e'en the deep and dread crevasse
Is wreathed with tender ferns and grass :
Then where on earth doth Nature stand
More truly beautiful and grand ?
Where homage more unfeigned demand
Than in the sturdy Switzer's land ?

And richer treasures yet than those
Which come as Nature's choicest gift,
The homes amid thy hills disclose
And far and wide thy fame uplift ;
A people, hardy, temperate, true,
With hearts to feel and hands to do ;
Who, though their earthly lot was cast
'Mid empires, powerful and vast,
Yet kept their freedom to the last,

And, come what might, yet dared be free
In face of proudest tyranny.

The child that first beholds the light
Beneath some soaring Alpine height ;
That grows familiar with its form,
And early learns to brave the storm,
Looking with firm and dauntless eye
On all the tumult of the sky ;
That daily breathes a mountain air
And feasts upon its beauties rare ;
That fearless leaps from rock to rock,
All heedless of the thunder-shock,
Well skill'd with steadfast foot and brain
The loftiest peaks, secure, to gain ;
That hourly faces dangers grim
At peril both of life and limb ;
How shall such offspring ever be
Aught else but constant, brave, and free ?

Thus oft hath Liberty—denied
All refuge but the bleak hillside—
Found shelter in the peace that fills
The bosom of thy glorious hills.
Here, by thy peaks which tower to heaven,
Was promise of protection given.

Here, by their strong and friendly aid—
When leagued Oppression stood arrayed—
Was kept one spot of holy ground
Where Freedom still a refuge found.



Canto X.

THE WAYSIDE CROSS.

The crimson sun had sunk to rest
Behind a lofty Alpine crest,
Beneath whose shelter lay unroll'd
A landscape, picturesque and bold,
Whose undulations, deep and wide,
Like ocean billows in their pride,
Stretched from its base on every side.

Just where the shadows deepest lay,
And earliest fades the light of day,
A winding valley might be seen
Threading its way the crags between,
Dotted with many a humble cot
Where dwells, contented with his lot,

The hardy mountaineer whose heart
Craves not a prouder, loftier part
In this world's eager, madding strife,
Or on the battlefield of life.

The chime that told the sunset hour
Had sounded from the convent tower,
And from the humble village spire
 An answering echo softly came,
As if to wake each pure desire,
 And quench each false, unholy flame,
Bidding each restless spirit cease
From selfish toil, and seek for peace
At that one source of love profound
Where only, perfect, it is found.

Just where the road the valley spurns
And up the steep abruptly turns,
There stands within a deep recess,
'Gainst the huge rock's ungainliness,
A wooden cross, all rudely wrought,
And yet enough to lure the thought
Of passer-by to Him who bore,
With loving heart and spirit sore,
A weightier load of grief and pain
Than all who follow in His train.

Little it knew of sculptor's art—

Made no appeal to cultured taste ;
Yet, doubtless, it had done its part

For God and man in that wild waste,
And mingled with the dross of earth
A something of a nobler worth.

Before the cross, upon her knees,

A peasant girl all meekly drooped,
And lightly on the fresh'ning breeze

Her dark locks fluttered, as she stooped
An instant, as in reverent prayer ;

Then, lifted up her dark gray eyes,
As if to read an answer there

In the still radiance of the skies.
But on their calm, unruffled face
There came no hand divine to trace,
As on the proud Chaldean's hall,
One single sentence to appall
The suppliant's heart, or one sweet word
To soothe a breast by sorrow stirred.

But, lo ! a rustling on the air—

A footfall on the pathway bare ;

But, pastime of the idle wind,

No echo in that heart they find.

'Tis but a woman's patient tread,
Only a bowed and weary head :
Only a figure—faint, opprest—
 Pursuing till its goal is won ;
Only a spirit seeking rest,
 Yet in the wide world finding none.

A little space, amazed, she stands
With straining eyes and trembling hands ;
As in the very house of death,
She scarcely dares to draw her breath.
Then, in its sweet intensity,
Her soul goes out in sympathy
To that lone form and piteous face,
 Which, in the hour of pain and loss,
Had found their fitting resting-place
 Beneath the shadow of the cross.

No need of mystic lore to know
The secret of that pictured woe ;
Experience holds the truest key
To every human agony.
The bleeding feet themselves have trod
The thorny path ordained of God ;
The trembling lips the cup have drained
From which life's sweetest hopes were strained ;

The empty shrine in which, bereft,
No earthly idol now is left ;
The exile for whose safe return
No blazing hearth shall brightly burn—
Who through the earth, from end to end,
Can call no living mortal *friend* :
Ah ! who, than these, can sooner trace
In every feature of the face—
In seaméd brow, unkindling eye,
Where gleams no more Hope's courage high—
In quivering lip—uncertain gait—
The victim of an unkind fate ;
That direst form of earth's distress,
Born of an utter loneliness ?

No need for her who gazed, to frame
That lot in any earthly name ;
No need to gauge by process slow
The measure of that silent woe ;
Needless the rushing tide of tears
Which soothes the heart that sorrow sears ;
Needless the passionate, bitter moan—
“ Alone ! Alone ! ”

With footstep light, the wand'rer steals,
To where the youthful suppliant kneels ;

Beside her sinks upon the sward
And leans the drooping form toward.
One arm with eager, tender haste,
She wreathes around the slender waist;
Draws the fair head upon her breast—
By its own weight of care opprest—
As o'er that bosom's tempest, wild,
There comes a voice—how soft! “My child!”

One sudden and convulsive start—
One flutt'ring of the guileless heart;
One troubled look of doubt and fear—
One glance into those eyes so clear,
And, every mist of doubt dispelled,
She, eager, sought the peace that welled
From their pure depth's unsullied spring
To which, no more, defilements cling—
Whose troubled and embittered tide
The “branch divine” had purified:
Then on that loving, faithful breast
A haven found of peace and rest.

“My child, you weep! Have need to weep
For those dear forms in death who sleep.
And yet—they *sleep*! The conflict o'er,
For them, life's cares can vex no more.

They rest in peace ! No cruel hate—
More cruel than Death—can separate
Thy love from them—their love from thee,
Now theirs and thine eternally.
At least each dear, familiar name
Thy quiv'ring lips may seek to frame,
And make no secret of the grief
Which in such solace finds relief;
Whilst, o'er the mound which love uprears,
May fall the consecrating tears.

“ Beside thee one whose deeper woe
E'en such poor comfort must forego :
Whose tend'rest ties to earth are broken—
 Whose dearest idols are o'erthrown,
And yet their names must ne'er be spoken—
 In life, or death, must be unknown.
Wrapped in impenetrable cloud—
Less merciful than death's pure shroud—
Their fate, unsolved, must yet remain,
Whilst Hope, still baffled, seeks in vain
Some faint and glimmering light to gain.
The strongest prayer that faith can wing
To Heaven, all answer fails to bring ;
Or, like the dove from out the ark,
Goes forth upon the waters dark—

Circling awhile in aimless flight
Above the overwhelming tide—
Only once more within to light,
Still yearning and unsatisfied.

“If thou canst trust a friend like me—
Too reft of all that earth can give,
To harbor thought of harm to thee,
Or care to labor to deceive—
Let me thy loneliness befriend;
Let me with thee my wand’rings end,
And let our separate woes, combined,
A common consolation find!”

How sweet are sympathy and cheer,
E’en when the spirit seems so sear
That not one single flower or blade
Can venture to uplift its head!
How soon beneath their timely aid
The spirit, crushed—forlorn—dismayed,
Recruits its strength, at least in part;
And hope, rekindled in the heart,
Puts forth again its petals fair
To let the sunlight settle there.

So—list'ning to the stranger's speech
Which falls, like dew on arid plain,
And gazing on those eyes which teach
So much of triumph over pain—
The suppliant, rising to her feet,
Takes the kind hands within her own.
With grateful deference, soft and sweet,
She leads her to a *chalet* lone,
Deserted now by all who gave
It warmth and beauty—light and peace,
And still and cheerless, as the grave,
Where all earth's varied trials must cease.
Here—sweet companion of her woe—
She bids her further toil forego,
And share, with her the simple lot
And unpretending peasant's cot;
Which, else, her unprotected years
Must quit in homelessness and tears.



Canto XI.

LÉONIE DUVERGNE.

Ah ! how describe the sense of rest
The wand'rer's mind and limbs confessed ?
How calm the haven she had found
After the dull and weary round,
The strain of which she never knew
Until the needed respite drew
Her grateful heart at length to see
Its absolute necessity !
How welcome, too, the links of love
Which common sorrow swiftly wove,
To bind two wounded hearts as one
In close and sweet communion !

The maiden's tale was quickly told,
For grief in youth finds ready tongue.
Her friend had little to unfold
She could confide to one so young ;

And yet, in spite of all her fears,
Some fragments of her life would fall,
For kindly hearts and willing ears
Make ever good confessional.

A father lost when Alpine snow
Lay deep amid the mountain rifts,
And all the winding vale below
Was overwhelmed with mighty drifts :
A mother, victim of disease
Which spares not Edens such as these,
But leaves the trace of sin's sad blight
E'en on these plains of spotless white.
A youth left friendless and forlorn,
To higher hopes and prospects born :
This was the substance of a tale
Which, when recounted, could not fail
To waken in her hearer free
And unrestrained sympathy.

But still another name was found,
With those best loved, all closely bound ;
Which—mourned with almost equal pain—
Must ever in her mind remain.
“A friend?” “No more. But, oh, how dear!”
No youthful lover—this was clear.

His mention made no pulse to gain,
Nor brought upon her cheek a stain ;
And yet his loss had wrought her pain.

"A kinsman?" "No." "A stranger?" "Yes.
His name—condition, none could guess."
"A peasant?" "No." "French? German?
Swiss?"

"We had no certain clue to this.
He spake in many tongues with ease,
And used them oft his hosts to please ;
Yet left behind no single trace
Of home or lineage, rank or race."

Such were the answers freely made
And such the interest betrayed,
As, sitting in the ev'ning, still,
Beneath the shadow of the hill,
Her friend, at first, to speed the hour,
Would question after question shower.
But, as the answers strangely came,
Again revived, the stifled flame
Began to flicker in the heart
So often doomed from hope to part
And see its light, so soft and fair,
But set once more in dark despair.

Ah! could it be that all her toil
Should bring her but to such a goal?
That this should be the highest spoil
Vouchsafed to fill her yearning soul?
Only the record of a life
Yielded so early in the strife;
The memory of a spirit, pure,
Which ever constant must endure,
Until the heart that it had lighted—
At length by woe, persistent, blighted—
Itself should cease to live and burn,
And “dust to dust” again return.

It needed but a little skill,
Directed by an eager will—
The smallest exercise of force,
To draw from such a willing source
The history of the peaceful close
Of his mysterious career,
Who 'mid these hills had found repose
Denied him in his native sphere:
To gain, in simplest forms of speech,
A truer tribute to his worth
Than storied monuments which preach
The virtues of the lords of earth;

Shewing how man can brave the blast
Of human hate and bigotry,
And keep, untainted to the last,
His spirit's truth and purity.

"When came he?" "On an autumn eve.
The reapers had begun to leave
Their daily toil; and through the street
Were hying to the calm retreat
Of their rude homes, which 'mid the wild
In rustic loveliness still smiled,
And lent a charm to all the scene
Which, else, too desolate had been.

"The sky above was clear and calm.
The air around was soft as balm.
The sun, behind the mountain crest,
Was glorifying all the West.
The ruddy tint upon the leaves
Well matched in hue the standing sheaves.
All Nature donned her suit of brown,
Save where the snow-wreaths ceaseless crown
The peaks which soar above the range
Of elemental strife and change.

"Here was a wagon full of grain
Attended by a merry train,

The mules all brave with ribbons gay—
The village girls in bright array—
The lads with scythes and sickles keen—
Old men on alpenstocks who lean.
Here was a drove of lowing kine,
And there a woman serving wine,
The product of the native vine.

“ Low-seated on the shaven grass,
I watched the gay procession pass—
With many a kindly nod and smile,
And many a coy and harmless wile
For friends of past and present days,
Who, eager, sought to fix my gaze—
Unconscious, till the street was free,
Of one, who, resting wearily
Beneath a rocky crag, had been
Amused spectator of the scene.

“ A blush—a start—a passing shade,
My marked disfavor had betrayed
At what I deemed, in my surprise,
Contemptuous look in stranger eyes.
But, instantly approaching near,
The traveler in his accents clear—
With grace of manner all his own,
Begged pardon for an interest shewn

In such a scene of happy mirth
'But rarely given,' he said, 'to earth,
And like a cordial to the heart
Which in such pleasures knows no part.'

"No more could maiden heart resist
Such full *amende*, than mountain mist
Withstand the sun's concentrate powers,
When all its rising beams it showers
Upon the valleys dark below
And makes them 'neath its radiance glow.
And when he told of journeyings long—
Of failing health, and soul opprest—
Only sustained by purpose strong,
And asked for shelter and for rest;
My pity gave with tearful eye
What pride, offended, would deny.

"I led him to the vine-clad cot,
A stone cast only from the spot,
And made his wants and weakness known
To her who had been left alone
Of all my early friends to be
The guardian of my infancy.
A kindly welcome there, I knew,
Would but be deemed the traveler's due;
For at that lowly threshold few

Could plead in vain, if frank and free,
The rites of hospitality.

“ ’Twas strange we never paused to mark
How fast and firm our friendship grew ;
And, though the days were short and dark,
How fleet and light the moments flew.
With heavy heart and failing health,
The stranger, it would seem, had wealth ;
Ample at least for all the care
He needed, and the simple fare
Which seemed sufficient to invite
His pure, unpampered appetite,
Leaving his generous spirit free
For noblest acts of charity.
Had he been born a mountain child
And known no home but some such wild,
More suited he could scarce have been
To such a life and such a scene.”



Canto XII.

THE STRANGER-FRIEND.

“ How shall I tell of all he wrought
 To cheer the heart—to raise the mind,
Till every deed and every thought
 A loftier level seemed to find?
How, skilled in many a useful art,
He sought his talents to impart,
And taught the villagers to turn
 Their native skill to higher spoil,
And win more suitable return
 For honest and ingenious toil?
How, the long winter days and nights—
When fierce winds raged upon the heights—
Were seasons now of calm delights,
As giving brain and hand employ—
Lending to life a sweeter joy,

And bringing, in the days to come,
Full many a comfort to each home,
Making those humble thresholds free
From chilling gloom of poverty?

“ Full oft, when daily toils were o’er,
He would disclose his goodly store
Of varied knowledge, rich and rare—
For he had traveled everywhere—
And by the blazing hearth instil
Such lessons as, the mind, would fill
With aspirations pure and high
The nobler paths of life to try?

“ ’Twas from his lips had flowed the truth,
As ne’er before it blessed my youth.
I learned the history of our land;
How it had sheltered many a band—
Whose worth the world might never know—
In their dark hour of pain and woe.
But most I learned to pity those,
Down-trodden by their ruthless foes
Because, in soul, they dared be free,
And scorned a spiritual tyranny.

“ He taught my careless eyes to trace
A Father’s love in every place,

Till mount and rock, and stream and dell
Seemed portions of a temple grand—
That, in it, He Himself might dwell—
The Lord of all the earth had planned;
And how the Master once had said,
‘The hairs were told on every head,
And not a sparrow fell, but He
Did hold it in His memory.’

“How blithely sped the winter night
When, in the huge log’s fitful light,
An eager group of young and old
Sat list’ning, rapt, to stories told
Of German, French, or Switzer’s lands:
How dauntlessly their noble bands
Stood forth in fierce and bloody fight
For fatherland, and home, and right;
And gave no thought to limb or life
In such a cause, and such a strife.
And, as all marked his look of pride—
The fire that sparkled in his eye,
He might have been a captain, tried,
Leading his hosts to victory.

“ E'en the good *curé*, old and gray,
Would smoke his pipe the blaze before,
And while the ev'ning hours away
With interchange of ancient lore.
He learned to love the stranger youth,
First, doubtless, for the stamp of truth
He wore upon his open face ;
But none the less for that sweet grace
Of speech and manner, which would thrall
With wond'rous charm the hearts of all.

“ He loved to hear him talk of Art—
Of many a custom, quaint and old :
But, when some deeper thought his heart
Would warm, and waxed his spirit bold—
Launched on resentment's gen'rous tide—
And he denounced in accents stern
The petty tyranny that tried
The rule of conscience to o'erturn,
The agéd priest would shake his head,
And glance around with aspect grave,
As with a certain, secret dread
For one so heedless and so brave :
For Rome, though shorn of temporal powers,
Yet largely sways these realms of ours,

And has her zealots everywhere,
Too ready to display their care
For that blest Faith, whose highest plea,
Their blinded eyes have failed to see,
Is the sweet grace of charity.

“No doubt the good man in his mind
Was questioning what this warmth might be,
And feared lest some should seek to find
A lurking taint of heresy.
Yet, in this still, secluded vale
But few, if any, ever heard
Of doubts that, minds without the pale
Of Holy Church, so deeply stirred.
We knew no heroes but the saints,
Whose pictured lives we learned by rote ;
And felt no burden in restraints
Whose weight we ne’er had paused to note.
The graver thoughts which, some, perplexed—
The claims that, others, sorely vexed,
Produced no ripple on the sea
Of our more peaceful piety.

“But, if from larger knowledge free,
We little knew of bigotry :

By priest or abbess, man or maid,
A kindly welcome e'er was said,
And none would fail with aid to bless
A heretic, if in distress."



Canto XIII.

LA GORGE DE ST. BARTHÉLÉMI.

“ Alas! that, o’er a scene so bright,
Should fall so terrible a night
As that which broke the pleasing spell—
Of which I tremble as I tell.

“ Low-seated in the ruddy glow,
Where all too fast the moments go,
Or busy with some light employ,
We never dreamed how brief our joy,
Nor read the meaning of the gloom
Presaging such an awful doom.
No heart grew faint—no cheek grew pale,
Nor failed the joke—the song—the tale;
Not one among us thought to see
So awful a catastrophe.

“Week after week the winds had swept
Around our happy mountain land.
Higher and higher the snow line crept—
A fathom deep it seemed to stand.
More fearful grew the gath’ring drifts
In dark ravines and craggy rifts,
Whilst o’er the undulating dales
A white and billowy waste prevails.
Vast wreaths, like shrouds, hang overhead—
The mountain passes none can tread.
The very prince of mountaineers—
A hardy Swiss, who mocked at fears,
Brave Paul Leroux—was well-nigh lost
In bringing in the weekly post;
The only intercourse we knew
With those beyond, for mails were few
And travelers rarely came to see
La Gorge de Saint Barthélémi.

“E’en twixt the dwellings scattered wide
Throughout the neighb’ring country-side,
But little contact now was known.
In many a hut and cabin lone
The tinkling of the convent-bell
The lapse of time alone would tell;

And, sounding thro' the thin, crisp air,
Would toll the hour for praise and prayer,
Reëchoing from hill to hill
That 'God was in His temple still,'
And yet looked down in love divine
From every snow-clad mountain shrine.

"Was it that, in our happiness,
We failed His holy name to bless?
Or was it, that the silence deep
Had lulled our watchful fears to sleep?
'Tis certain, when the wak'ning came,
It startled old and young the same.
The patriarch, witness, spared to be,
Of a revolving century,
Had never known the weather break,
Or bitter frost its hold forsake,
So early in the new-born year
Upon the hillside far and near.
All prayed they might not live to see
Again such widespread misery.

"For suddenly the wind had veered,
While o'er the steel-blue heavens fair
Dark forms of threat'ning cloud appear'd,
And soft and sluggish grew the air.

So thick the mists that clung to earth
One could not see a yard before ;
The hardiest dared not venture forth
A single rod from out the door.
Eye read in eye the growing awe—
Silent, we wait—the sudden thaw.

“ Only in such a place and scene
Can any learn aright what mean
These awful words. How dire and fell,
The woe and ruin which they tell !
No horrors wrought by flood or fire—
No earthquake's shock, or dread disease
Such terror and dismay inspire
In dwellers in such spots as these ;
Since, in one common loss combined,
Friends—fortune—life and all, they find.

“ E'en when at length the day-break fell,
So deep the gloom that hedged us in,
That not a living soul could tell
When night did cease and day begin.
But, with the setting of the sun,
The gath'ring clouds in fury broke.
Like liquid fire, the flashes ran
Across the heav'ns. The thunder woke

The echoes of the frozen hills.
The hollow earth, responsive, thrills.
Then, as each cheek grows deathly pale,
Down pours the mingled rain and hail,
In one long wild and furious rush.
We count each heart-beat in the hush
Between each fearful thunder peal,
Which makes the cabin rock and reel—
Our cold limbs quiver as we kneel.

“The little flock the cot could hold
Were penned, like trembling sheep, in fold.
More distant from the mountain-side,
It left a margin safe and wide
To stem the avalanche’s tide.
Within—some twenty souls in all—
We cower as the storms appall ;
For, save our *chalet*—which was found
Removed, and on a rising ground—
No other shelter, safe, was near
Short of the Convent of St. Cyr,
Whose walls were distant many a rood,
Whilst raged between the swollen flood.

“ I know not what the others thought,
Or what they prayed, or what they felt ;
For terror, silence deep had wrought.
But, as beside the hearth I knelt,
It seemed as if the past, unrolled,
Gave back that awful night of old,
When Israel’s God—about to free
His people from captivity—
Bade them, the ‘ paschal lamb,’ to slay
And sprinkle blood upon the door ;
Waiting in faith the coming day,
Till the Destroyer should pass o’er.

“ All through the night we knelt and prayed.
No hand divine the tempest stayed.
But when, increasing in its might,
The storm had reached its utmost height,
There came upon each ear a roar,
Such as not one had heard before.
It seemed that e’en the tempest failed.
The stoutest heart with horror quailed,
As in the pine-log’s fitful blaze
We, trembling, sought each other’s gaze.
The cheeks of all with terror blanch
Before the awful avalanche.

“O fearful night! whose hours must move
So cruelly slow for those whose love
Could but ill brook such long suspense—
When every single nerve was tense.
O fearful night! which, ere it parts,
Takes life and hope from countless hearts,
What strongest exercise of thought
Could estimate thy ruin wrought?

“’Twas midday ere the tempest ceased;
And all our little band, released,
Prepared to venture forth and try
Th’ extent of the calamity.
Alas! it far outweighed our fears;
Too great for words—too deep for tears.
I, Léonie Duvergne, would die,
Rather than life and fortune buy
With such another agony!

“For miles and miles the snow prevails
O’er mountain slopes and winding vales.
Save the old church and convent walls,
A habitation, scarce is seen;
Where once, at frequent intervals,
A hundred smiling homes had been.

Over some thousand peaceful dead
That spotless shroud was deeply spread.
'Twas far into the summer, bright,
When the last corpse was brought to light.
They knew no requiem but the wail
Of bitter blasts which hurried by :
No watchers but the bleak hills, pale,
Beneath Heav'n's spacious canopy.

“Such was the record, when, at last,
The sum of all our loss was cast.
But weeks passed by before we knew ;
For, daily, here and there, a few
Were rescued from untimely grave
By that devoted band, and brave,
Who, forth, with dauntless spirit went,
Day after day—though chill and spent—
And labored on in face of doom
To save their friends from living tomb.”



Canto XIV.

THE NAMELESS GRAVE.

“And foremost in this noble toil—
To snatch from Death his buried spoil—
Our stranger-friend. A friend indeed,
Who never, in our deepest need,
Did fail our drooping hearts to cheer
With promise of deliv’rance near :
Who, ever first to do and plan,
Devised the rescue—led the van,
And knew no rest by day nor night
In all that long and desperate fight ;
Until, o’ertaxed, his youthful strength—
His dauntless will succumbed at length,
And from that little pallet-bed,
 Surrounded by a grieving band,
His generous soul its passage sped
 And left us for the spirit-land.”

“ And did he naught to you reveal
Ere death his constant lips did seal?
Speak nothing of his friends—his home?
Where he was bound? Whence he did come?”

“ But little. Though, when fever raged,
He wrestled, like a lion caged;
And strove, as for his very life,
To reach his absent child and wife.
But when the kindly *curé* stood
Beside his couch, and raised the rood,
And questioned, ‘ if, in faith, he died,
Of the dear Lord—the Crucified?
And steadfast in the one true fold
Ordained by God in days of old?’
Then, seemed to fall a holy balm,
And, grew, his spirit, wond’rous calm.
A smile of heavenly sweetness came,
And kindled in his eyes a flame.
He upward gazed, all rapt, to Heaven—
Not one but caught the answer given:

“ The blessing of a holy priest
Comes, father, to a soul released,
Like the last beam of setting sun,
To smile upon a journey done.

Such blessing doth my spirit crave ;
'Twill cheer my passage to the grave.
I hold the faith—love all mankind ;
Still in the Church I refuge find,
And pray that, in the days in store,
She learn and teach His spirit more.'

"The gentle sisters, in their zeal,
But rarely left his chamber free.
Beside his couch in prayer they kneel,
Unceasing in their ministry.
But once, these summoned from his side,
And I a watching all alone—
He found the space, too long denied,
And charged me thus, in lowered tone :

"Dear Léonie, come here and kneel.
Let me your gentle hand-clasp feel.
Though soft, I know it true as steel.
You love me—all of you—I think ;
And now, upon the very brink
Of death's profound and dark abyss,
The only grace I ask, is this :

"I care not where my grave is made,
Nor what the tribute to it paid ;

And, yet, it brings me joy to know,
That sometimes thither you will go,
And drop at least a tender tear
Where lies a friend and brother, dear.
But, o'er that spot, where'er it be,
I would each traveler should see
The sacred sign ; and on its face,
Would have some hand th' inscription trace
Engraven on this signet ring ;
To which, I charge thee ! steadfast cling.
Then, with my wallet, let it be
Interred and guarded sacredly,
Till one may come who bears my name
The solemn trust at length to claim.
Mark the initials closely ! See !
'Tis hers alone who gives the key,
For I am—'

“ Floribel de Luys !

Ah, yes, my heart ! Thine instinct true
Would guide me right at last, I knew.
Though, wrapped in death, my love, I find,
The savor he hath left behind
Is yet so full of comfort, sweet,
I cannot deem it all a cheat.

Sweet Léonie, I claim my dust !
I claim—his wife—thy sacred trust !
And ever, till this heart be cold,
It shall thy tender form enfold,
And benediction seek for thee
For all thy sweet fidelity.”

* * * * *

How oft at eventide they stray,
To where, in peaceful shadow, lay
The little mound with wooden cross
Which told of all their common loss,
No need to tell ; for deepest grief
Will seek at times such sweet relief,
And strength and consolation gain
E'en in the memory of its pain.
Suffice to know, that mutual love,
 And mutual sympathy and cheer,
Like Heaven's own sunshine from above,
 Dispensed their solace year by year.
The individual burden, shared,
 Seemed robbed of half its weary load ;
And each was many a dark hour spared,
 As they pursued the common road.

And when the history of the vale
Became well-nigh a world-wide tale,

And, daily, curious trav'lers came
To view the scene of such ill fame ;
Not one but sought the church-yard, green,
Where might the stranger's grave be seen ;
And tried to read, but all in vain,
The monogram—distinct and plain—
Which held within its letters, three,
The still unraveled mystery ;
For, faithful to his very dust
Did Léonie preserve her trust.

E'en when long years shall have effaced
The touching lines, so rudely traced—
Those simple souls, beyond the skies,
Found rest and peace in Paradise,
For whom he fell in sacrifice ;
Rehearsed by many a cottage hearth,
His deeds shall yet be known on earth,
And still his lasting record be :

“Here lies—embalmed in memory—
A friend of St. Barthélemi.”



Canto XV.

THE WATERFALL.

Ten fleeting years have swiftly sped—
Ten years of calm content and peace.
Fair Léonie long since is wed ;
And, when her daily labors cease,
Will often come with children twain,
As spring resumes her beauteous reign
And frees the valley and the plain,
Beneath the roof-tree loved so well,
Where now, alone, her friend doth dwell.

Ah ! not *alone*, whose pathway lies
'Mid sad, but fondest memories :
Where ev'ry hour, from first to last,
Brings converse with a sacred Past :

When all on which we rest our eyes
A sweet companionship implies :
When ev'ry zephyr seems to thrill
The heart, and stir the withered leaves
Of perish'd joys, whose fragrance still
The present sadness yet relieves :
When breathes through all an undertone
From friends beloved, now dead and gone—
Ah ! this is not to be *alone*.

Within those kindly, shelt'ring walls
Did he not draw his parting breath ?
How ev'ry object still recalls
That peaceful—that heroic death !
Guarded, like shrine, that chamber still,
In which his dying charge was heard ;
In face of Léonie's firm will
No single article was stirr'd.
And now another vigil keeps—
Beside that pallet prays and weeps,
And feels in all the peaceful air
A holy presence ling'ring there,
Which chases all her doubts and fears
And brings a gladness thro' her tears.

So in the works of love, by one
Thus truly loved so well begun,

She finds a solace wond'rous sweet,
And toil enough for willing feet;
For soon, through all the winding vale,
Is known full well that visage pale—
That slender form and quiet mien—
That smile, so kindly and serene.

With thrifty spouse, yet kind and free,
No further need had Léonie
Of that poor cabin which had been
A witness to the painful scene
Which ever in her past career
Stands forth begirt with awe and fear.
A modest compensation paid—
Which she would gladly have gainsaid—
Secured her friend a tranquil home,
Until at least the time should come
When once again, the weary wild,
She needs must tread, to seek her child.

How oft in her divided heart

The tide of conflict ebb'd and flow'd !
Now all was ready to depart—

The last prayer said—last look bestowed
Upon the chamber, fair and still—
Upon the mound beside the hill.

E'en with her journey duly planned,
With scrip prepared and staff in hand,
There yet would come a sudden change,
Born of some intuition strange ;
And with a burst of sudden grief—
The charged spirit's best relief—
Her steadfast will subdued once more,
She gave the bitter contest o'er,
And clung to that secluded spot
From which his memory parted not ;
And which, like magnet, held her soul
With irresistible control.

Though oft renewed this inward strife,
How calm without the daily life !
That heart itself but knew the cost
Each time the fight was won or lost.
And when at length an agéd crone
Was cast upon the world alone,
Helpless and friendless, it appeared
As if her prayer at last were heard,
And Heaven itself had found a way
By which her home might be preserved,
And she left free to go or stay
As frequent as her purpose served.

How silently the years go by!

Or bright or dark, or grave or gay,
How well-nigh imperceptibly

To-day fades into yesterday!

We wake to find the task undone,
Or else, perchance, but scarce begun,
Which we had vowed should see its close
Before another sun uprose.

And so it was with her who found

Amid these hills this refuge sweet,
And chastened joy within the round
Once trodden by her loved one's feet.
A few brief pilgrimages made,

It may be in as many years,
Where'er her eager steps were led

By dawning hopes or quicken'd fears,
Had but sufficed to feed the flame
From whence the ceaseless yearning came,
And served but to revive the sting
A tender conscience yet will bring,
Though reason hath the charge denied,
And love itself is satisfied.

With soul oppressed and ill at ease,
Beyond her wont she heedless strays
To catch the fresh'ning western breeze
That round the height above her plays—
Scales the steep rocks, confus'dly piled,
On which the summer still hath smiled,
And left its tufts of tend'rest green
Where'er its footsteps, light, have been.
Guided by what? or whom? her eye,
Attracted, lights admiringly
Upon a deep, romantic glen,
Untrod, if not unknown of men.
Here, in fantastic garb arrayed,
Nature her wildest charms displayed,
And wood and water, rocks and fern
Lent grace to all her features stern.

Enraptured by the wild'ring scene,
She stays to feast each eager sense
On all the sweets the spot serene
Seems but too willing to dispense ;
Then, sinking on a rocky bank
'Bove which the brushwood, rich and rank,
Hath, interweaving, cast a shade,
As if for halting pilgrim made,

She yields herself at length, opprest,
To quiet thought and needed rest.

Whence is it we so freely draw
On Nature's vast and varied store,
Yet rarely give her credit due
For each sweet draught of bliss we knew?
By ev'ry fair and gracious gift
She would the sordid soul uplift.
In all her leafy temples, green,
She preaches of the Great Unseen,
And fills the far-reëchoing skies
With never-ending symphonies.
Whate'er the scene, where'er the spot—
E'en when, too rapt, we heed it not—
She soothes the soul with peace divine,
Upon its wounds pours oil and wine,
And for distressed and troubled minds
Some blessed antidote still finds.

How many an ingrate never knew
From whence he hope and courage drew
For all the daily wear of life,
And all the anguish and the strife,
Until the light of heav'n hath paled—
The bounteous source of blessing failed,

And left, alike, to hearing—sight,
Unbroken silence—deepest night!

Ah! did such thoughts as these possess
Her brain in this sweet wilderness?
On which had rested peace profound
But for the constant babbling sound
Of yonder waterfall, which leapt
From rock to rock, or, eager, crept
Between the jagged boulders, gray,
Which gave its waters devious way.

If so, they moved to other strain,
As plainer still, and still more plain,
There grew a method in its tone
Which spake unto her bosom lone,
And—with a meaning full and clear
She paled and trembled but to hear—
Seemed with her inmost thoughts to chime.
For, in a weird and endless rhyme,
It framed the purpose of her heart,
From which, though oft constrained to part,
She never yet had wholly lost;
And which, however great the cost,
She felt she must again renew
Ere yet another summer flew.

Intent, she heeds—still more intent ;
Yea, all her soul, it seemed, she lent,
As thus the ceaseless waters sang,
The while from ledge to ledge they sprang
Unceasingly :

SONG OF THE WATERFALL.

Up in the mountain
I leave the fountain
Where my glittering crystals first saw the light :
My course, unending,
Forever wending,
I journey along by day and by night.

Hurrying ever—
Loitering never,
Hither and thither, my way I take ;
Gallantly leaping—
Silently creeping
Over the rocky ledge—under the brake.

Under the noonlight—
Under the moonlight—
Under the pale blue gleam of the stars ;
Darting and quivering,
Starting and shivering,
My bosom all bright with their silver bars.

By rock or heather,
Spite of all weather,
The mountains reëcho my murmuring song ;
Ne'er am I lonely—
One purpose only
In all my bright ripples that hurry along.

Ne'er do I waver
From fear or from favor—
From summer's soft smiles, or from winter's sharp
cold.

Streams, slowly stealing,
May know congealing,
But never a spirit that's steadfast and bold.

Ne'er am I weary,
Lightsome or dreary
The wildering way that is given me to tread ;
Be the sun beaming,
Or lightning gleaming
Through the dark thunder-cloud looming o'er-
head.

Singing or sighing,
Onward still hying,
Ne'er can I pause till my journey is done ;

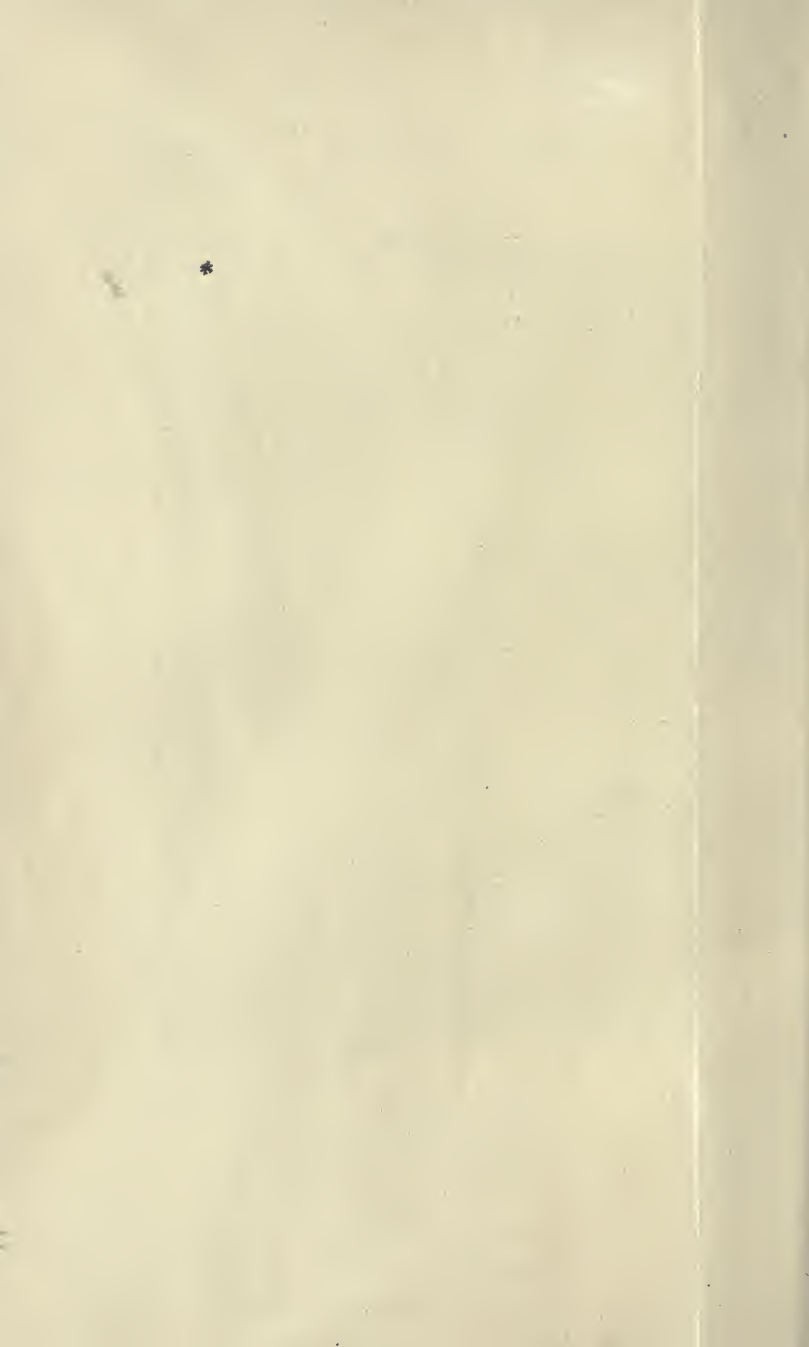
Ever in motion
Till, in the ocean,
I mingle forever my waters in one.

Thus with the rhythm of the stream,
Her long-repressed emotions seem
With freshen'd energy to move.
She hears an inward voice approve
The spirit of its endless song,
As, eddying the rocks among,
It speeds, so resolute and strong.

No longer on the turf she lies,
As one all listless and forlorn.
A fire is kindled in her eyes,
Not new, but only newly born.
She stands erect upon her feet,
And bears her patient head to Heaven.
She renders thanks and praises meet
For strength and courage freshly given:
Then, as her wav'ring spirit grows
The stronger for the brief repose,
She summons all its latent might;
Prepares again for that fierce fight,
So oft resumed—so often lost,
And that at such a bitter cost



"A Native American in a hammock."
 1877. La Yola, Mexico.
 "A Native American in a hammock."
 —Globe, 1877.



Of inward self-reproach and pain
And fondest yearnings, foully slain.

As one before the altar kneels
With spirit wholly consecrate,
And all the solemn influence feels
Which on Divinity doth wait:
So, in that temple—which alone
The overarching heavens spanned,
And where each tree and pillared stone
A silent witness seemed to stand—
Repeating o'er her solemn vow
And ne'er more resolute than now,
She sought within that rocky shrine
Some gleam upon her path to shine
Some friendly hand to lift the pall—
That held concealed her hope—her all.



Canto XVI.

THE ANNUAL FAIR.

A quaint old town beside the Rhine,
Whose burghers' jolly faces shine
With home-brewed ale and native wine —
Whose busy streets, all brave and gay,
Proclaim a public holiday.

All densely packed the public square
By village maids with braided hair
In dark-blue kirtles—scarlet hose,
And peasant lads in Sunday clothes :
By ancient dames in brave array
Whose style dates back full many a day,
And which, preserved with jealous care,
But sees the light at seasons rare—
A christening, funeral, or fair.

Here golden fruits, and flowers shine—
The purple product of the vine,
With many a simple work of art
Where taste and skill have done their part.
Here weblike lace where roses bloom,
Wrought by the hand and not by loom,
And plaited goods, and wooden-ware
Carved with dexterity and care.

Such mingled sight one ne'er can see,
Nor such a varied company
In goodly fellowship combine
At Hoehel-Stoltzenberg-am-Rhein,
Save when, on such occasion rare,
They one and all alike repair
To grace the city's annual fair.

Amid the surging of the crowd,
Amid the talk and laughter loud,
No easy task, from place to place,
An individual form to trace,
Or note each sound that seemed to jar,
Upon the list'ner's ears between—
Each look of suffering that would mar
The festive aspect of the scene.

And so, when mirth was at its height,
One gentle soul that long had striven
With grief, was pluming for its flight
To final rest and peace in Heaven ;
And one new visitant to earth
Lay, helpless, on a breast of stone,
Pleading to her who gave it birth
In pitiful, yet fruitless moan.
A lamentable sight to see
Is weak, untended infancy !

But on one solitary form
Full many a curious eye was cast,
For like a bark—survived the storm—
It bore the marks of conflict past :
The very calm those eyes that fill
Bore witness to the tumult still,
And never failed to fix the gaze
That o'er that wond'rous visage strays.

Yet, all regardless of the din
Through which she moved unfalt'ringly,
Sustained but by the grace within,
Pressed, constant still, Marie de Luys.

Some tidings sad of deepest woe
Had reached her sympathetic ears,
And, from their crystal depths below,
Had drawn the ever-ready tears.
Taught by experience in the past,
Her charity ne'er failed to cast
O'er ev'ry form of earth's distress
That mantle God 'bove all doth bless,
Woven of love and tenderness.

Her willing feet had found the road
To want and sorrow's dark abode ;
And, fired with eager love and zeal—
As prompt to act, as quick to feel—
Was seeking in her hiding-place
Some child of suff'ring or disgrace,
Who once—'twas told—of lineage high,
Had fallen from her proud estate—
A fair young mother, left to die
Forgotten, hopeless, desolate,
Leaving a babe on earth's bleak wild,
On which no father's eye had smiled,
To the rude pity—foster care
But of an agéd, sordid pair
Who knew no sympathy for pain,
And served alone for hope of gain.

* * * * *

An attic in a narrow street
Whose upper stories well-nigh meet
O'er an impenetrable shade
Where loitering sunbeam never played.
Here, on a mean, neglected bed
A fragile form, in beauty spread,
Lay, like a lovely lily—flower
Fresh from some sweet and bloomy bower,
Whose delicate and bruised stem
Had on the earth its diadem
To hopeless ruin sadly given,
No more to court the smiles of Heaven.

Too late to stay the hand of Death,
 This welcome friend in hour of strife;
Yet not too late from parting breath
 To learn the history of a life;
A life of cruel, bitter wrong—
A life, in patient faith, how strong!
Pure as the cloudless heaven above,
And whose one fault was—truest love.

And not too late to give her rest
Upon that tried and faithful breast;
Or those fast-fleeting moments cheer,
And calm each fond maternal fear.

Ah! not too late to sun a soul
In that last ling'ring smile of peace
Which sometimes comes, when, near the goal,
All tumults of the conflict cease.
Ah! not too late to set the sign,
On that pale brow, of love divine.

And well repaid were all her fears,-
And all her bosom's tender care,
In that sweet babe which, born to tears,
From out the waste, found refuge there;
Which brought within that faithful ark—
Long driven upon the waters dark—
A beauty and a light which gave
A type of life beyond the grave.

And richer still the recompense,
She finds by Heaven's high award,
In all the joy it doth dispense,
When brought to light that secret hoard
Which from the brave and constant heart
The hand of Death alone could part

Ah! precious gift by love bequeathed.
A necklet, fair, of gleaming pearls:
A locket, where are found enwreathed
Two intertwining, clinging curls—

One darksome as the ebon night,
One, like the sunlight, golden bright :
A marriage record ; and with these
A miniature, in which she sees—
Ah ! can it be, his race is run ?—
The features of her long-sought son.

What need of further evidence
To satisfy that inward sense,
The gift to woman's innocence ?
That lofty brow—those eyes of fire,
Reveal the husband, son and sire.
She sees the partner of her prime—
O'erleaping all the lapse of time—
Stand once again before her sight
In manly pride and beauty bright.

And now, at last, the riddle's read.
Her child—her long-sought son is dead.
And she, his bride—so sadly won,
By purest love alone undone—
Is scion of a noble race,
Who, high in lineage and in place,
Had scorned his seeming low estate
And hurried with relentless hate
The helpless pair to hapless fate,

Leaving but in these relics three
A clew to their sad history.

* * * * *

How close the secret she had kept ;
How long before her anger slept
Against a house which scorned to own
Offspring as noble as its own,
Until the retribution came
And quench'd resentment's cruel flame—
It boots not here to pause to tell.
In her lone cabin guarded well,
Secure from ev'ry curious eye,
The child had passed her infancy.
Destroyed was every single trace
That might betray her hiding-place,
In whom two races now combine
To form one common, noble line
By the commingled ancestry
Of Rudersdorf and of de Luy.



Canto XVII.

THE BARON.

The sun's meridian heat is past,
And Nature wakes to life at last.
A gentle breeze steals down the hill
And rustles 'mid the copses still.
The birds that throng the rough hillside
Prepare to greet the eventide,
And tune their tender throats to raise
Their wonted evensong of praise.
Broader the grateful shadows creep,
While purer airs the spirit steep.
The charm, relaxed, no longer holds
All Nature in its mystic folds.

A sweeter fragrance is distilled.
With murmuring sounds the air is fill'd.

The streamlet sings in louder strain.
The laborer plies his toil again.
The river ripples 'mid the reeds.
The ploughmen urge the flagging steeds.
O'er hill above—o'er vale below
There comes a soft and crimson glow
To glorify the varied scene
On which the little sylvan queen
Looks, trembling, forth from bower green.

But soon she leaves her mossy throne
And, eager, scans the pathway lone ;
A fluttering in her childish heart,
Yet all resolved to do her part.
Spirit and flesh alike confess
A curious kind of passiveness ;
As though the powers invisible
Her inward thoughts and acts compel—
Her spirit with a purpose fill,
And make her every movement still
The subject of a stronger will.

Rare picture, such as artists love—
Which all to tenderness might move,
That childish form, so slight and fair,
With cheeks all flushed and streaming hair,

With parted lips—expectant gaze,
Piercing the balmy ev'ning haze,
Unconscious of the fact that she,
Though robed in sweet simplicity,
Is one of Heav'n's own ministry.

But, lo! the sound of coming feet
Invade the silent, safe retreat.
A form familiar now ascends
The rugged path, and slowly wends
His upward way o'er stock and stone,
All listless, purposeless, alone.
His frame is bent, his silvered hair
But little recks of taste or care.
His mien is born of high command,
Though trembles, on his staff, his hand.
Each feature of his chiseled face,
Together with a nameless grace,
Proclaim alike his rank and race
More truly than the star which clings
Upon his breast, and gleaming, flings
Each glancing ray of crimson light
Back from its jewels, flashing bright.

Ah! well the child that figure knew:
Unknown, indeed, it was to few,

Since every single rood of ground
He owned for many a mile around ;
And none that looked upon that form
In council-hall, or battle's storm—
In garb of peace, or girt with sword,
But knew him—Rudersdorf's stern lord,
And bared the head to let him by
In sad, respectful sympathy.

The babe upon its mother's knee
Had learned that life's sad history ;
And many a word of wrath and scorn,
And tyrannous deed were meekly borne
In memory of the burden laid
Upon that bowed and silvered head.
And crones, the village hearth beside,
Within the chimney, gaping wide,
Would tell amid the deep'ning gloom
That fills the peasant's lowly room,
Like bard of old, enthroned in state,
The lofty deeds of love or hate,
And all the honors thick that shine
On Rudersdorf's illustrious line.

How, ever foremost in the field,
Its sons might die but never yield ;

How, in the thickest of the fray,
No warriors terrible as they ;
How, when victorious o'er the foe,
None could more gen'rous pity know ;
How, ranged upon the ancient walls
Within their proud ancestral halls,
Were trophies hung in grand array,
The spoils of many a bloody day ;
And how both king and kaiser, too,
Had given them aye the honor due.

Then, sinking to a softer strain,
They told of sorrow, wrath, and pain ;
Of beauty plucked in fairest pride
When Rudersdorf's fair mistress died ;
Of that pale bud upon her breast
That only lived to share her rest
Beneath the stately, hallowed shrine
Where sleep a long illustrious line.

They told of youth in sweetest prime,
All dead and withered ere its time ;
Of dawning manhood in its might—
All worthy of its ancient name—
Returning from the bloody fight
Bereft of everything but fame ;

The last 'mid clashing arms to bear
The proud insignia of his race,
And leave a stainless record, fair,
Which none might after blush to trace.



Canto XVIII.

MARGARÉTHÉ.

And then, each softer heart to move,
They wove the fair romaunt of love—
Old as mankind, yet ever new,
Dear to the many, not the few—
Whose subtle tones ne'er cease to thrill,
And in the memory linger still.

They told of Margaréthé fair,
The loveliest, sweetest, brightest gem
That ever shed its lustre rare
From Rudersdorf's proud diadem,
Renowned as it had ever been
For beauty, grace, and courtly mien.

Ah! sad indeed the mournful tale,
At which the maiden's cheek grew pale;

Whilst 'neath her bodice flutt'ringly
The heart beat quick in sympathy,
As, midway held 'twixt grief and fear,
Trembled the little pearly tear,
Until the story nears its close,
When, free, the tide of sorrow flows.

The brave old baron's dearest pride,
Through whom he hoped to be allied
With Reifenstein's illustrious heir,
And many an ancient feud repair—
How, from her childhood, had he set
His hopes upon this scion, sweet,
From that old stock which ne'er as yet
Had failed of grace and honor meet!
And, as in beauty still she grew
And wider homage yet could claim,
A brighter picture still he drew
Of earthly dignity and fame.

He saw her fairest of the fair
Around his monarch's ancient throne,
Whose lineage high could scarcely share
A brighter lustre than his own,
On whom so rare a fortune smiled.
The parent of a queenly child

Who in her person should unite—
Now that his heir had died in fight—
Two houses by one common band;
Who 'mong the first in all the land,
Than he, should wider fame command?

But, ah! whilst wiser heads will scheme,
Youth still must dream its idle dream,
Weaving, regardless all of fate,
Its chaplets fair; but when too late
Perceiving what Love had concealed—
The poison yet to be revealed--
And reaping on the arid plain
Of disappointment and of pain
But useless chaff for bearded grain.

And yet, perchance, when all is told,
'Tis hard the balance, true, to hold.
How weigh, 'gainst worldly greed and art,
The impulse of a fresh young heart?
A loveless life in stately halls,
With home where true affection calls?
A spirit, chafing, crushed and bound,
Like captive treading daily round,
With one, though breathing freer air,
Consumed by many a sordid care?

Shall, every other want supplied,
Only heart-hunger be denied?
Or must, to meet a need like this,
Be bartered, all the world deems bliss?

'Tis well a wiser Mind than ours—
So limited in all its powers—
Controls and guides our poor affairs,
And portions out our joys and cares;
And, throned upon the judgment seat,
Assigns to each condition meet,
Weaving of grace and purpose free
The web which we call "destiny."

Ah! sad the web which truest love
For gentle Margaréthé wove,
When 'cross her path there came a light,
So dazzling, beautiful and bright,
That, list'ning only to the heart
That beat so wildly in her breast,
She chose the purer, loftier part,
And left to Providence the rest.

A young adventurer at the court—
So was he styled—the mischief wrought.
Young, brave and debonair was he.
Though boasting naught of ancestry,

Or wealth or favor, he had won
The notice of a prince's son ;
And hence, as friendship's fond award,
His rank among the royal guard.

He saw and loved, and so did she ;
For both, alike, were fancy free.
Each had a warm and generous heart,
Which needed but its counterpart
Round which to twine its tendrils strong,
Unconscious all of harm or wrong.
Each gathered from their mutual love
A bliss all earthly bliss above.

How they could meet and interchange
Their tender thoughts and solemn vows
Within the strict and narrow range
Which courtly etiquette allows,
Will, likely, never be betrayed ;
Since long ago the play was played,
And all the characters have left
The little stage on which they moved,
Of ev'ry other memory reft
Excepting that—they lived and loved.

There is a language, we are told,
By no material laws controlled,
Which all our inmost nature stirs,
Yet needs no written characters :
Which makes its meaning plain and clear,
Though not a sound may reach the ear
To wake responsive hope or fear.
To any sense alone confined,
It yet can pass from mind to mind.
Yea, were all outward senses still,
A something yet remains to thrill ;
And soul will still be drawn to soul,
As moves the needle to the pole.

Two clouds may float in liquid air
And all may be serene and fair,
If each pursue its separate flight
Through the wide fields of azure light.
But, if in closer contact brought,
How quick the transformation wrought !
The subtle fluid each contained
No longer now may rest restrained ;
But, in one common force combined,
A fearful energy will find,

And generate so fierce a heat
That Nature reels before the shock,
Which makes her pulses madly beat
And rends in twain the living rock.

E'en so it is with youth and maid
When once the fatal train is laid,
And from the welkin, still and dark,
Hath gleamed the swift electric spark.
No human power can then withstand
Or stay the tempest with its hand,
Although too well it may foresee
How awful the catastrophe :
Nor is there forged on earth a chain
Its headlong fury can restrain.

"Love, in his sleeve," 'tis said, "will laugh
At bolts and bars, and ever quaff
A sweeter pleasure from the prize
That's strictly watched with jealous eyes."
Be this sage judgment as it may,
'Tis patent as the light of day
That, spite of all that may assail,
He will declare his tender tale.

And so it chanced on one fair day—
When all believed her bridal near—
The court was filled with blank dismay
And paralyzed by awe and fear ;
For vanished from the stately scene
Was she who late had peerless been—
The loveliest of the vestal band
Which round their royal mistress stand.
The pride of Rudersdorf was gone—
Not from her father's arms alone,
But from the shelter of the throne.
Was ever breach more heinous known
In all the quaint old records yet
Of courtly rule and etiquette ?

If wrong the deed, love bear the blame !
Yet soon the retribution came.
The bridegroom, ruined and disgraced—
His rank revoked, his name effaced—
Dared not withstand the royal wrath,
Nor cross a vengeful parent's path ;
But hastened from the land to flee
And perished in obscurity.

The bride, renounced by king and sire,
Could not endure a parent's ire,

But drooped before the bitter blast,
Like tender blossom on its stem ;
And so another jewel was cast
From Rudersdorf's proud diadem.
She only lived to close the eyes
Of him she followed to the skies,
Leaving to one whose yearning heart
Desired no sweeter, better part,
The seal the Father's hand had set
On that young love, which slaughtered, yet
Had known no feeling of regret ;
But which alike, as each had seen,
Their highest bliss and woe had been.



Canto XIX.

EDELWEISS.

Still, to the only blossom spared—
A girl, blue eyed and golden haired—
The old man in his anger turned,
As substitute for her he spurned.
On her he lavished all the store
Of earthly love his bosom bore.
No voice, like hers, his heart could thrill.
He knew no law but her sweet will :
With her forgot his wrath and tears—
His blighted hopes and anxious fears—
Th' increasing burden of his years.
He called her "bird of paradise,"
His "*liebe kleine Edelweiss* ;"
And never seemed to know delight
But when he held her in his sight.

In truth, she was a winsome child
As ever on a parent smiled ;
And well the little tyrant knew
The subtle power by which she drew—
Stronger than any band of steel—
Her captive at her chariot wheel.
But, soon, a light broke on the scene.
With childish intuition, keen,
She pierced the sorrow of the breast
On which she loved her head to rest,
And vowed with tender constancy—
Her life henceforth should ever be
To him a perfect ministry.

But when again bereavement came,
And she—the last to bear his name—
Faded before his yearning eyes
And left him for th' impatient skies,
Vanquished at last by pain and care,
He yielded to a dark despair.
The spirit, strong, had lost its power.
The gen'rous heart began to sour.
Till he, who once was loved of all
In peasant's hut and noble's hall,
Grew stern and pitiless as fate,
The object of a smothered hate.

Then, all impatient of his lot,
The wrath which long had slumbered not,
His loneliness and grief allayed.
Against her one offense arrayed,
He set his yearning and his ruth—
Her weak and inexperienced youth ;
And by the little new-raised grave
He sorrowed, pitied, and forgave,
And sought with penitential tears
The child he spurned in earlier years.

But, ah ! too late ! too late regret !
The light of that young life had set—
Had set in darkness and distress.
No tender touch, no fond caress
Was there to take the sting from death ;
No friend to watch the parting breath.
By stranger hands her eyelids sealed—
Her name and rank alike concealed,
A little heap of sodded ground,
As sole memorial, was found,
Of her whose fault—if fault, above—
Was that she simply dared—to love.

What wonder that the heart grew cold,
Where such a history might be told ?

That—wounded, heartsore, desolate—
 He well-nigh loathed his rank and state,
 And left to cold and selfish hands
 Both duty's, yea, and fame's demands?
 Till, through the country far and wide,
 That race was scorned, once named with pride,
 And Rudersdorf's princely domain,
 Where peace and plenty once did reign,
 Became one universal scene
 Of tyranny and avarice, mean.

* * * * *

On this sad history, often heard,
 The mountain child had sadly mused,
 As pity, sweet, her heart had stirred
 And tears her gentle eyes suffused.
 Full oft, when, sporting by the brook,
 She saw the old man, lonely, pass,
 She'd steal a sympathizing look,
 Half hidden in the ferns and grass.
 But never, to the left or right,
 Was once the Baron known to turn.
 Upon the ground was fixed his sight.
 His aspect, proud and cold and stern,

Seemed ne'er to catch a softer glow
From all the beaming heavens above,
Nor, by the smiling earth below,
Was won to kindness and to love.

But now, beneath an impulse, strange,
She does not dare to disobey,
All wondering at the sudden change,
She seeks the narrow, rocky way.
With downcast eyes and blushing cheek—
With graceful attitude and meek,
She stands an instant in his path :
And then, as if to ward his wrath,
She drops upon her bended knee
In sweet, old-fashioned courtesy,
Lifting above her drooping head
Her simple wild-wood offering,
O'er which kind Nature's hand had spread
The perfumes, manifold, which cling.

How will he view her action bold ?
And she, so young, and he, so old ;
He, of so lofty a degree,
And she, a child of poverty ;
He, with the star upon his breast,
And she, so poorly, coarsely drest.

Ne'er had she scanned, with spirit sore,
Her humble raiment thus before ;
Been conscious of her tangled hair—
Her limbs and feet, so brown and bare.

And well might thoughts like these career
Through all the labyrinth of her brain,
As, alternating, hope and fear
Within her throbbing bosom reign :
For, standing rooted to the ground,
Like timepiece in its daily round
All sudden checked, the baron's gaze
Seemed as obscured by sudden haze.
He stood, as in a gloom profound,
Straining the ear for guiding sound.

Then, dreamily, as he who wakes
From deepest sleep when daylight breaks
To flood with beauty all the earth
And give a myriad flow'rets birth,
He saw the child upon her knee,
All veiled in maiden modesty.
He saw the offering in her hand—
Fair product of the mountain land,
And read, in its simplicity,
Her sweet and childlike sympathy.

A tremor passed through all his frame,
As to his eyes the moisture came.
The flood-gates, closed for many years,
Scarce held the rising tide of tears.
His voice grew husky, low, and weak—
He dared not trust himself to speak;
But, bending to the kneeling child—
More lovely 'mid that mountain wild—
He lifts her gently from the ground—
Looks for an instant, wond'ring, round:
Then, gazing in her deep blue eyes—
Wide open now with mute surprise—
As one who pierces through the skies,
In low, half-uttered accents cries—
“Liebe kleine Edelweiss!”

A moment—and, the weakness past,
The skies again are overcast—
The precious vision quickly flown,
And he is once again—alone.

All kindly on the drooping head
A trembling hand is lightly laid;
A tear lies on the open brow
From which all fear hath vanish'd now,
And once again he breasts the hill
As fall the ev'ning shadows chill.

Canto XX.

AT REST.

'Twere sweet to tell in simple song
How, constant, thro' the summer long
The little maid at close of day
Would meet the Baron on his way,
And never, as the sunlight paled,
To pay her simple tribute failed.

Not as the sullen vassal yields
The hard-earned produce of his fields,
But as a simple, tender heart
Will seek its pity to impart :
Not in the firstlings of the fold—
In luscious fruits, or grain, or gold :
Only the wildflowers, sweet, that wreath
Thy woods and dells, fair Fatherland !
And their fond memory bequeath
To thy brave sons on distant strand ;

And which—in exile, sickness, death—
To many a wand'rer on the earth,
Come, like a fresh, reviving breath,
From the dear soil that gave him birth.

'Twere sweet to tell how, sad and stern,
He gave her, first, but little heed;
Would scarce his glance upon her turn,
But, silent, on his path proceed:
How, soon, the listless eye would light
Upon that picture, pure and bright,
Until a moist'ning of the eye—

A nervous trembling in the hand
That on his staff pressed heavily,
Would shew the effort to command
The rising tide that surged below
And threatened instant overflow.

But, as the daylight comes and goes,
That slender form familiar grows;
And dearer, yea, and dearer yet,
That picture, fair, so rudely set.
And as he sees the childish awe
Melt into soft and sunny smiles,
What could the chill heart do but thaw
Before such captivating wiles

As rarely fail to thrill the soul
And make it own their soft control ?

So, day by day, his way he took
Past mossy bank and babbling brook.
A something—what he could not tell—
Would lead him still towards the fell ;
A something that his heart would crave—
A something that the contact gave.

As Memory links some scene gone by
With passing glint of summer sky ;
With ling'ring echo of a strain
That thrilled with mingled joy and pain ;
With parting breath of perfume, sweet,
Exhaled in softer, sunnier climes,
Which comes, the vacant heart, to greet
From the dead joys of earlier times :
So to each charmed and thrilling sense
Would these their subtle power dispense.

And so the summer days went by,
And suns uprose and set again,
And flowers came to bloom and die,
And ruddier grew the ripening grain.

And so within the old man's breast
Still mellower grew the frozen heart,
As to the rugged mountain-crest
Sunset doth warmer hue impart.
His eyes had learned to seek the place
Where, aye, the childish figure stood
With downcast look and glowing face,
Sweet denizen of fell and wood.
Perhaps himself could scarcely tell
How strong the tie, how sweet the spell
Which Past and Present wrought so well:
Yet, in the answering look and smile
Her simple, childish arts beguile,
The little "oread," doubtless, read
How surely had her mission sped.

* * * * *

But, on an autumn eve, it chanced,
Deserted was the rocky way.
Ne'er had the golden sunbeams danced
More lightly on each quiv'ring spray.
Ne'er had a softer, balmier air
Breathed on those scenes so passing fair..
Ne'er sang the birds in blither tone ;
Nor, gayer, on its pathway, lone,
Rippled the brook o'er turf and stone.

Upon the distant forest, dun,
The sinking, well-nigh level sun
Had background formed of brown and gold,
A beauteous setting, fit to hold
The fairest type of form or face
Which such a paradise could grace.

E'en to the Baron's listless eye
The scene stood forth invitingly,
As once again he onward pressed
To the rough hill's familiar crest.
But, where the murmuring brook did cross,
All deviously, the mountain way,
What was the sudden sense of loss
That seemed his upward path to stay?

There stood before him, in the wild,
No fairy form of mountain child
With cheeks aglow. No ruddy hair
Was given to the fresh'ning air.
From out those orbs of deepest blue,
Beamed not the glance, so pure and true,
Whose tender light he loved to greet.
There shone no fair and dimpled feet
Upon the turf, so soft and green,
Where, late, was wont, the sylvan queen,
To stand in innocence serene.

Unlifted were the slender hands
Which had unwound the Past's stern bands,
And, by their simple offering, won
To life and hope, a heart undone.

He paused an instant, troubled—dazed,
Then eagerly around him gazed,
If haply, thro' the leafy screen,
That childish form might yet be seen.
But when upon his heart, forlorn,
Th' unwelcome truth at length was borne,
It seemed a sudden weakness came.
A trembling seized his stalwart frame,
And, sinking on a friendly stone,
He knew himself again—alone.
E'en this faint gleam of joy must be
Too bright to gild *his* destiny.

How long he might have wrestled there
In silence with his dark despair,
We may not know. Upon the air
There came a pitiful, low moan,
As from those walls of living stone,
Followed by cries of grief and pain
As leave but hearts whose love is slain.

Upstarting with the thrilling sound,
He gains the rock with single bound,
Where thro' th' embowering trees he spies
The smoke-wreaths circling to the skies.
A moment, and the porch is pass'd—
His shadow on the threshold cast ;
And, silent, o'er the earthen floor
He seeks the inner chamber door.
'Tis open ; and anon he sees
A group of women on their knees
Around the simple pallet bed
Whereon a dying form is spread,
O'er which a hallowed calm is shed.

Whatever pangs that spirit bore ;
However faint that heart, and sore ;
Whatever lines of grief and care
Were ploughed upon that forehead fair ;
However rough the pathway prest
To reach the goal of final rest ;
There now was left no ling'ring trace
To mar the beauty of a face
Where righteousness and peace had met,
And immortality had set
Its awful seal.

* * * * *

As, when the storm, its course, has run,
The skies will clear at set of sun ;
As, when hath passed the winter long,
Comes spring with perfume and with song ;
So often, at the close of life—
Though one long scene of pain and strife—
Will shine amid the gath'ring cloud
A light which naught on earth can shroud,
Nor dark, funereal plumes that wave,
Nor all the horrors of the grave.
Beneath it, soft, the eyelids close.
The weary spirit seeks repose.
The hands fold gently on the breast
Where all emotion is at rest.
The furrows leave the tranquil brow,
The cheeks assume a parting glow ;
And the whole aspect of the scene
Is full of peacefulness serene.

* * * * *

With dimpled arms around her thrown—
The ruddy locks about her spread—
The child's fresh cheek against her own—
The parting soul had well-nigh fled.
That shadow through the doorway cast,
And through the chamber gliding past—

Though not a sound had reached the ear,
Tells of a human presence near,
And seems the parting soul to stay
An instant on its heavenward way.

A smile—so sweet, its only birth
Could be of Heaven, not of earth—
Once more relights the kindling eyes
Too soon to commerce with the skies.
It flickers on the lips and cheek.
She cannot rise—she may not speak;
But, as the old man, reverent, stands,
She takes the little slender hands,
Sets them within the trembling grasp
Which tightens with protecting clasp;
Then, by the final effort spent,
Breathes forth her spirit, all content.



Canto XXI.

THE DREAM FULFILLED.

The solemn looks which witness lent—
The silence round that lifeless dust,
As with a holy sacrament,
Had sealed that sacred, parting trust.
The Baron, 'mid the mute surprise,
Closes himself the sightless eyes.
Then, with that aspect resolute
Which brooks nor question nor dispute,
Issues to those who round him stand,
In accents low, each brief command;
Provides for all with fitting care;
Assigns to each her proper share—
Attention meet, protection sure,
The funeral rites and sepulture.

Low-seated by that silent couch,
Upon the child he lays a touch,
So soft and tender as to leave
No place for doubt, no room to grieve.
All gently striving to unbind
The arms around the corse entwined,
He takes the child all tenderly
And draws her, passive, to his knee.
He wreathes her arms about his neck—
Which, ne'er did fairer collar deck—
And lays her drooping head to rest
Upon his strong and craving breast,
Just where the star, resplendent, gleams :
And never had its proudest beams
Gleamed forth more beauteous on the sight,
Or shone with more of lustre bright,
Than those moist eyes and wistful face,
So full of sorrow's touching grace,
Which 'neath those locks so full and free
Upturn to his so timidly.

* * * * *

How paint the feelings of the child,
As now, adown the steep hillside,
She leaves the dear, congenial wild,
Clinging all closely to her guide

With instinct true, to childhood known,
And not reserved for brute alone?
Unmindful they of aught beside—
What eye might scorn, or lip deride;
Each found in each a something more
Than either e'er had found before;
Both felt it good for them to be
Thus in each other's company.

Together down the tortuous road
They sought the Baron's proud abode.
Together through the village passed,
Where many a curious glance was cast.
What tender tie these twain could hold?
And she, so young, and he, so old;
He, of so lofty a degree,
And she, a child of penury;
He, with the star upon his breast,
And she, in rustic habit drest.

But, gazing in the saddened face
Where pity, sweet, she yet can trace,
She heeds not now, with spirit sore,
Her simple raiment, scorned before—
Her tangled locks of ruddy hair—
Her shapely limbs, so brown and bare.

The deeper anguish swallows all,
And leaves no space for troubles small.
But in her loneliness and grief—
His presence brings a sweet relief.
Of every natural tie bereft—
With not one kindred bosom left
On which to lean her childish head—
On which her welling tears to shed,
She, like the little tendril, flings
Her hopes around the friendly form,
Which now alone protection brings—
Her only refuge from the storm.

And little doth the Baron reck
What clothes his little charge bedeck.
One hand within his own enclasped,
He heeds not that the other grasped,
All loosely bound, her little hoard
Of treasures, long so safely stored.
He sees alone the streaming hair—
The beaming brow—the visage fair—
The large blue orbs, so deep and clear,
Which seem, as from another sphere,
To bring again from yonder skies
His "liebe kleine Edelweiss."

* * * * *

And now the village lies behind.

The bridge that spans the stream is crossed.
Through avenues with lindens lined,

The child moves on, in wonder lost.
They pass beneath the frowning gate

Which oft had turned the tide of war,
Still girt with much of ancient state

Though marked by many a dint and scar;
Where on the 'scutcheon, gray and old,
Wrought with enamel and with gold,
Some ling'ring traces, yet did shine,
Of power which graced the ancient line.

In spite of all her awe and fears,
E'en through the mist of unshed tears,
She notes how changed was all the scene
Where once the reign of taste had been.

Here rose the grass above the knees.
Here bowed to earth the ancient trees,
Oppressed beneath the heavy weight
Of unpruned limbs, left desolate.
Here, all untrimmed, the garden beds.
Across the walks the briar spreads,
And many a vase of sculptured stone—
Abloom with flowers in days by-gone—
Stands weather-stained and moss o'ergrown.

Here, scarce above the fountain's brim,
The sluggish waters slowly ooze,
Once leaping o'er the marble rim
A grateful coolness to diffuse,
And, sparkling in the changeful light,
Each drop, with flash of diamond, bright.

They pass within the castle door,
They tread the tessellated floor,
Awaking echoes, as they go,
That seem to speak of long ago.
From many a picture, fair and bright—

From many an effigy of stone,
Shine features, fine, and eyes whose light
Find their reflection in her own,
Though all unconscious of her claim
To share their titles or their name.

Unheeded still, their footsteps fall,
In that well-nigh deserted hall,
Where once the belted barons sate
Begirt with pageantry and state;
And wassail shout and laughter gay
Full oft was heard till break of day,
And children sported mid the throng,
And echoed loud the battle-song.

No liveried lackeys line the way
Their servile deference to pay.
Amid the shadows, softly blent,
The Baron's eyes are downward bent ;
The child's with wonder larger grow
As hand in hand they, silent, go
Adown those once resplendent halls,
Where still upon the tarnished walls
May yet be seen in proud display
The spoils of many a bloody fray ;
Where stalwart knights, in armor drest,
Stand, lifelike, forth with helm and crest,
Which oft, like storm-bird in the sky,
Had gleamed above the conflict high.

Anon they reach an open door
With crimson portière draped before.
The Baron, silent, leads the way
Where, sad, he broods from day to day
In sombre silence—painful thought,
Little doing—heeding naught.
Only busy with the past—
Counting o'er the blossoms cast
From off that proud ancestral tree,
Of which the last on earth is he,
Doomed now to hopeless misery.

An antique chamber, oaken ceiled,
With panels, wrought with taste and care ;
With storied windows that revealed
In rich designs a genius rare ;
With pictures limned by master-hands,
And treasures borne from distant lands ;
With many a volume, richly dight,
Of learning sage, or fancy bright ;
With German lore or wit of France ;
With monkish legend— gay romance,
And all that wealth and taste can give
To make it privilege to live.

Beside the oriel, through whose panes
The sunset falls in crimson stains
Upon the polished oaken floor,
And all the chamber's goodly store,
Was set a carvéd ebon chair,
High-wrought, and of a finish rare.
Upon its back, in filigree—
Once a bright blaze of heraldry—
Was traced in exquisite design
The arms of each converging line
That centred in that agéd form
Alone had braved foul fortune's storm.

And now, within its close embrace,
He bows his head a little space.
With downcast eyes and folded hands
The mountain-child before him stands ;
Her homespun raiment, coarse and spare—
Her neck and limbs and feet still bare ;
But in the meshes of her hair,
 And on her brow and lips and cheek
The sunbeams weave such colors rare
 As human art may vainly seek.

She seems no more a peasant child
Brought from some lonely, rocky wild ;
But a " creation " such as, vain,
Hath filled full many an artist's brain
Who yet hath lacked the taste and skill
To make its charms the canvas fill.
It seems to glorify the room—
Banish the all-pervading gloom,
And tell of happiness in store
When fell despair shall blight no more.

And when the old man fain would raise
His drooping head, and fondly gaze,
Perchance these thoughts thrill through his
 heart,
And bid the brooding clouds depart :

Or, threading back the lapse of years—
With all their sorrows, pains and fears—
He sees the lost child of his love
Come down to bless him from above—
To bid his spirit's yearning cease,
And crown his latest hours with peace.

Emotions, long suppressed, arise
And surge within his bosom lone :
They' beam a welcome from his eyes—
They thrill in every look and tone ;
As, flinging wide his hung'ring arms,
He bids her cease her vain alarms,
And, like his long-lost darling, come
To warm and cheer an old man's home.

The outstretched arms—the pleading look,
No other answer seemed to brook.
With one loud sob of joy and grief—
One deep-drawn sigh of sweet relief ;
With fond, shy look and mantling face,
She springs into his warm embrace,
Finding at last a fitting rest
Upon that yearning, faithful breast.

* * * * *

Time fails to tell

How, 'neath her gentle, loving reign,
The wither'd heart grew young again ;
How, soon, the darkness disappeared
And all the dull horizon cleared ;
How, through the hamlets far and wide,
By kindly hands, were wants supplied ;
How, under wise and loving rule,
Throve cottage home and village school ;
How, hope and courage, well-nigh spent,
Revived, and flourished sweet content.

How, once again, that ancient hall

Reëchoed with the pleasant sound
Of laughter, as the evenings fall

In pallid mists on all around,
Or when the gathering tempest's shout
Forbids all contact from without.

How, once again, the gardens fair
Grew bright with blossoms rich and rare ;
How, fountains glittered in the light,
Whilst, on the turf, so soft and bright,
Were groups of sportive children seen,
Enlivening the festive scene,
As old and young, with heart and voice,
In sweet domestic love, rejoice.

How, Rudersdorf's stern, gloomy lord—
Again to hopeful life restored—
No more in solitude repined,
But did increasing honor find
Around the throne and 'mid his peers,
A goodly sight, for all his years.
How, something of its ancient state
Did still upon the castle wait,
With less of coldness and of pride,
 And more of kindness and of love,
That made its influence far and wide
 A benison from Heaven above.
How—once, where curses, loud and deep,
 Were heard against th' unfeeling hand
That seemed with iron hold to keep
 The peasants serfs upon the land—
Came smiles, and tears, and blessings sweet,
Thankful a milder rule to greet.

* * * * * * *

First, as a little waif, upcast
Upon the shore by tempest-blast,
And for the memories of the Past,
 He took the child into his heart;
Nor did he know how strangely fast
 She won him by each childish art.

'Twas only after years had flown,
And she into his life had grown
So deeply as to know no fear
That aught, his love, could quench or sear,
He chanced to note her little store—
Which ne'er had met his gaze before—
The necklet with its links of gold,
The jeweled locket which did hold
The face of her, in days gone by,
Wept with so sore an agony.
Ah! then, he knew, by witness strong,
That righted was the bitter wrong
Which, through these years of woe and pain,
A burden on his soul had lain—
That, in the child whose tender grace
 Had filled his days with new delight,
Was one who, in his heart, her place
 Held by inalienable right.

* * * * * * *

And years go by on lightsome wing,
And each has meed of peace to bring,
Till on one fair, auspicious day,
When earth was clothed in garlands gay,
Upon the balmy air there swells
The happy sound of wedding-bells ;

And by the ancient altar kneeling,
'Mid the sweet organ's solemn pealing,
And 'mid the holy joy distilled,
The Baron sees his dream fulfilled—
“The union of the ancient line
Of Rudersdorf with Reifenstein.”



Canto XXII.

SUNSET.

How fast between the banks of Time
Life's silent river seems to glide!
Childhood and manhood—age and prime
Are marked by bendings, deep and wide,
Until—the journey nearly done—
We stay the beating of the oar,
And with the setting of the sun,
Glance back upon the stream once more.
Then, to the failing eye and hand,
How small the space that has been spann'd!
How fine the interval that parts
These phases found in human hearts!
How brief the spaces that divide
These stations on the flowing tide!

And as we pass the latest bend,
Where nearer draws the river's end,
And feel the motion of the sea
We mortals call Eternity,
And, fearless, trim our little bark
To face the waters cold and dark,
How oft will faith, like beacon light,
Beam forth upon us, clear and bright,
And shew, as through a golden haze,
Fair pictures in the coming days!

* * * * *

I see an old man, full of years,
And full of honors—full of peace;
A richly freighted bark that nears
The haven where all conflicts cease.
I see him, as the daylight parts,
Steeped in a tranquil, pure delight—
Encompass'd aye by loving hearts,
And willing hands, and footsteps light.
I see around him bright forms move,
Dear objects of his tender love,
Whose pleasant voices oft recall—
When ev'ning shadows softly fall—
Sweet echoes in that ancient hall,
Long dark and silent, drear and cold,
In the sad days that were of old.

I see, within the ruddy light,
Visions of grace and beauty bright
Come forth from out the bitter Past,
With no dark shadows overcast.
Another Margaréthe moves

Where pride and wrath no longer dwell.
She lives—and once again she loves—

Perchance, unwisely—yet 'tis well :
For from that Past a light is thrown
And hearts have larger—milder grown ;
And each to each gives fuller meed,
And pity flows, more broad and free,
Whilst, in the hour of grief or need,
Is found a truer sympathy.

I see another Edelweiss,
With sunny hair and deep blue eyes,
And Saxon worth and Frankish grace,
Adorn the once deserted place—
Fit type of her commingled race.
Her constant place beside his chair,
I see her yield him tend'rest care ;
Till, in the silent lapse of years,
The old man, through his grateful tears,
Will Past and Present see converge,
And, in one common object, merge

Their tender hues of love and grace,
To beautify one childish face.

And oft he fails to realize
Whose hand his daily need supplies;
And, like one waken'd from a dream,
Amid the scenes confused, will deem
Himself far back upon the stream.

I see another Marie rise
With just such dark and lustrous eyes
As those which time nor trial could quench,
Nor utmost peril cause to blench;
With just such locks of dusky hue,
And such a heart, so loyal and true,
As yields its purpose but with breath,
And knows no conqueror but—Death.

And, 'mid the wid'ning group, I see
Another Floribel de Luys,
With all his charms of form and face—
With all the courage of his race—
With all the ancient chivalry
Of an illustrious ancestry,
Which, living—dying, must be free.

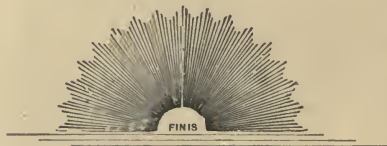
And in this scion of his race,
Whose lot is cast in happier days,
He now assumes his rightful place
And a far wider influence sways,
Whose lofty will and steadfast faith
E'en Alpine snows could never steep,
Though—victim of untimely death—
He, 'neath their white wreaths, sank to sleep.
Foremost in Freedom's sacred cause,
As one but born to lead—command,
His spirit brooks no other laws
Than Conscience, Right and Fatherland ;
And heeds no tyrant's brand or ban
That seeks to make man less than—man.

* * * * *

The glorious autumn sun has set
In crimson splendor in the west ;
But, on the far hills ling'ring yet,
Its beams, refracted, softly rest.
They light upon an agéd face
Where time hath left but little trace
Of all its bygone pains and shocks :
They thread with gold the snowy locks,
That crown the honored, patient head
But waiting till its course is sped.

He sits beneath an ancient tree,
A time-worn book upon his knee.
Around him, grouped, are children three,
Who follow with a curious gaze,
As, in the soft and golden haze,
He, rev'rent, turns the hallow'd page
Which doth his deeper thought engage.
He bids them seek his fav'rite line,
So bright with comfort all divine—
The message from the King of kings
Which His inspiréd prophet brings.

With childish glee they scan the page—
So void to youth—so full to age—
Till stands before the old man's sight
The golden promise, sweet and bright—
“At evening time it shall be light.”



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• Biographical Notice •

FROM QUERIES, JANUARY, 1887.

“Rev. Henry Faulkner Darnell, D.D., two of whose recent publications we have received, was born in London, Eng., and is the son of the late Rev. James Darnell, Rector of Pentlowe and Cavendish, in the County of Essex, Eng. Having received a liberal education in connection with the Universities of Dublin and Cambridge, he was admitted to Deacon's and Priest's orders in the Church of England by the Archbishop of York, in 1858; having previously held the mathematical and classical professorships in H. M. Royal School at Raphoe, Ireland. He subsequently filled important ecclesiastical and educational positions in England and Canada. The subject of this notice has for some years past occupied the position of Rector of the Episcopal Church at Avon, N. Y., devoting his leisure to literary pursuits. He is the author of numerous essays, poems, and articles on religious, literary and social subjects, which have appeared from time to time both in American and English magazines. Among these we may mention 'The Pilbury Portfolio,' a series of papers of the *Spectator* class, which achieved, some years ago, a marked success. Among these papers were, 'Spectacles,' 'Pleasant People,' 'The Table d'Hôte,' 'Wet Blankets,' 'Children,' and the 'Good Old Times.' His published works are, 'The Cross Roads,' an Allegory, published in 1856 by George Sims, Manchester, Eng., and now out of print; 'Songs by the Way,' a collection of original poems, published by John Lovell, Montreal, in 1862, also out of print; 'Songs of the Seasons,' a volume of original poems, elegantly printed and bound in holiday fashion, published in 1885. Corresponding with the above is 'A Nation's Thanksgiving,' a Psalm of Praise, dedicated by permission to Miss Cleveland, and published in 1886. In addition, we understand the author of the above works has completed two stories of English and Continental life, the first of which, 'Philip Hazebrook; or, The Junior Curate,' has been advertised as being ready for the press.”



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